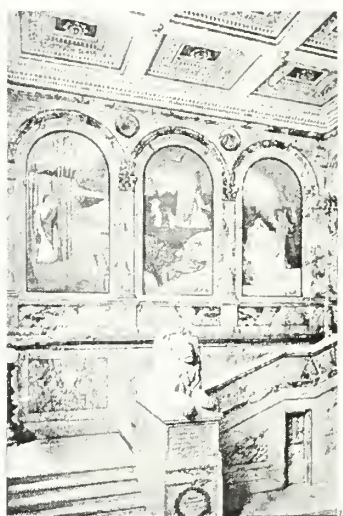


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IRWIN D. HOFFMAN
AN ARTIST'S LIFE



Hoffman as Painter

IRWIN D. HOFFMAN
AN ARTIST'S LIFE

ESSAYS

*on the artistic career of
Irwin D. Hoffman*

WITH COMMENTARY
*by the artist on an exhibition
of his work in the
Boston Public Library
in 1981*

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FOREWORD

THIS VOLUME is a record of a retrospective exhibition of the works of Irwin D. Hoffman, sponsored by the Boston Public Library July 15 – September 30, 1981, and a symposium presented in conjunction with that exhibition on September 23, 1981. Included are the lectures presented at that time by Theresa Cederholm, Acting Curator, Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library; Sinclair Hitchings, Keeper of Prints, Boston Public Library; and Mahonri S. Young, art critic and author. Also included are remarks by the artist, delivered at a reception which followed the symposium.

The catalogue of the exhibition itself provides a running commentary by the artist on the various works exhibited—but, beyond that, a spontaneous revelation of the artist's wit, his candor, his philosophy. The commentary is derived from interviews taped by Library staff in Irwin Hoffman's New York apartment and at the Boston Public Library.

Entries for Hoffman's works are brief and are given in this order: title, date, medium, and dimensions in inches. Since the artist usually signs his works Irwin D. Hoffman, such a signature can be assumed, in the absence of a note to the contrary. Thanks to the generosity of the Schmidts, the McQuillans, and the artist himself, ownership of the works may be attributed to the Boston Public Library unless otherwise indicated. Works exhibited from Harvard University were on loan from the Department of Geological Sciences.

The Library pays tribute here to all who contributed to the exhibition and to this publication, most notably to Irwin David Hoffman. In addition to the major contributions of the authors, already named

here, it should be added that the assembling of the various pieces of this record was in the hands of the Library's Staff Officer for Special Projects, Jane Manthorne.

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INTRODUCTION

IN THE FALL of 1981 the Boston Public Library mounted an important exhibition, "Irwin D. Hoffman: A Retrospective." The Library also sponsored a symposium titled "Irwin D. Hoffman: The Evolution of an Artist," with presentations by Mahonri S. Young, Sinclair Hitchings, and Theresa Cederholm. This publication is a record of the exhibition and the symposium.

Several circumstances made the exhibition and tributes to Hoffman possible, most notably the fact that the Boston Public Library has been the honored recipient of gifts of the works of the distinguished American artist. A major gift came to the Library from Dr. and Mrs. Gerhard Schmidt of Brookline. Since that initial gift from the Schmidts, the Library has received from the artist himself a profusion of personal records, drawings, watercolors, and prints. From Walter and Wendy McQuillan the Library received a gift of Irwin Hoffman's portrait in oils of conductor Pierre Monteux. In addition to such substantial gifts of the artist's works, Library staff members charged with collection building in the arts have shared an ongoing, intimate dialogue with the artist in visits and correspondence—a rare opportunity.

All this adds up to something remarkable; anyone who wants to tell the story of Irwin Hoffman must come to the Boston Public Library. In various subject areas a great research library serves as the collection of last resort. Among such research collections of great depth, richly rewarding to the student and historian, are the collections of the Boston Public Library which unfold the life and work of Irwin David Hoffman. They have the interest of not only a personal story; they

also cast light on decades of American art which more and more are the subject of articles, books, and exhibitions. The Library is fortunate to be able to contribute to knowledge of the great movement in American art which was in progress during the Twenties and Thirties and is now a prized part of our artistic heritage.

PHILIP J. MCNIFF, Director
Boston Public Library

IRWIN D. HOFFMAN

THE ARTIST'S LIFE
THROUGH HIS RECORDS

a slide lecture by Theresa D. Cederholm

ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO I wrote an effusive thank you letter to Irwin Hoffman, whom I had never met, for his gift to the library of a book which had been delivered to me by a mutual friend. What I didn't know then was that the book actually belonged to yet a third party and had not been meant as a gift, but had been sent by the friend for my inspection with the thought that the library might like to obtain a copy.

I can only say that Irwin's response to this miserable state of affairs was typical of his usual expansive generosity and aplomb. He quietly provided his friend with an autographed replacement copy and replied graciously to my missive. After much additional correspondence over the year, he subsequently arranged for the donation to the Boston Public Library of a glorious portfolio of forty of his finest prints. This came as the gift of the late Dr. Gerhard and Mrs. Schmidt of Brookline, longtime friends of the Hoffmans at their summer home in Woodstock, Vermont. This gift forms the nucleus of what is now our burgeoning Hoffman Collection. Subsequent to this first gift, the Boston Public Library has since been the happy recipient of the following gifts from the artist: all of Irwin Hoffman's remaining sketchbooks, more than seventy of his watercolors, and many additional prints. Recently the Library has received, as the gift of Walter and Wendy McQuillan of New York City, the oil portrait of Boston Symphony Orchestra conductor Pierre Monteux, which now hangs in the antechamber of the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts.



Hoffman as Sculptor

In addition to his works of art, Irwin Hoffman has turned over to us cartons of personal memorabilia, correspondence, scrapbooks, and other records of his exceptionally interesting life, and it is with some of these intriguing tidbits and pieces of ephemera and works of art that I would like to piece together for you some aspects of his fascinating career.

Irwin Hoffman was born on Chelsea Street, East Boston, in 1901 to Russian immigrant parents. His father Jacob was a tailor, and his mother Minna was a spirited and loving lady who rode herd over her lively brood of four sons: Arnold, Robert, David, and Irwin.

These parents, though of modest means, were extravagant in their support of their progeny's varied interests. In a new country, where technology was making the success of millions, they must have been



Hoffman sketches a miner underground

delighted that three of their sons studied science and mining geology at Harvard, and two (Arnold and Robert) went on to become immensely successful mining engineers and subsequently founded their own mining companies. David, the eldest, was lost in World War I with the sinking of the *U.S.S. Tampa*. Irwin's fine portrait of his brother is in the collection of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

The sensitivity and enthusiasm with which these immigrant parents encouraged their maverick son Irwin to become an artist is quite moving in the face of the tremendous pressures facing new citizens at the turn of the century. At six Irwin received a pad and charcoal from his Uncle Alec, a printer on the *Boston American*. Needing no further encouragement, the young boy began his lifelong love affair with art. At East Boston High teachers spotted an unusual gift and arranged for



"The Three Musketeers": Irwin, Arnold, and Robert Hoffman

his attendance at afternoon classes at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. Young Irwin became one of only a dozen such special students from Boston and its suburbs. Upon high school graduation, Hoffman was accepted—though underaged—as a regular student at the Museum School on a full scholarship. Because he had already had two years of Museum School instruction, he was far more advanced than the average entering student.

Testimony to this status is the school's consistent use of Hoffman's sketches and models to illustrate the School's bulletins and catalogues. It was nevertheless heady business when, at the age of nineteen, he was given a one-man show at Boston's Grace Horne Galleries and was subsequently referred to in the press as a "prodigy at portraiture."

His experience at the Museum School was lively and varied, and his personal reminiscences of his instructors and fellow students are (at worst) tremendously entertaining, and at best, provide an intensely personal and illuminating viewpoint of what it was *really* like to be an art student in Boston at a time when activity at the Museum School was at a sustained peak immediately following the tenure of Edmund Tarbell. Irwin Hoffman's Museum School was that of teachers such as Philip Hale and Ralph McClellan, Frederick Allen, Charles Grafly and Frederick Boseley, Anson Cross, Leslie Thompson, and William (Uncle Petie) Bicknell. His classmates were Amelia Peabody, Elizabeth Saltonstall, Aiden Ripley and John Castano; Bashka Paef, Josef Presser and Anthony DiBono and Bela Pratt's sons Dudley and Minor, Cyrus Dallin's son Arthur, and Aaron Berkman. They and their classmates mingled with their Museum School teachers and other artists and instructors such as Charles Hopkinson, William Paxton, Joseph DeCamp, and Jay Hambidge at studios, cafes, and especially at the Brush and Chisel Club.

Many changes took place in these years, when some very great and influential instructors were centered in Boston, and when promising talents were picked out, nurtured, and sent off to develop, as was often the case, in Europe. It was to precisely this end, Irwin found, that his studies led him, for in 1924 he was awarded the school's most prestigious award, the Paige Traveling Scholarship, which allowed



The artist on site in mine pit with his brother Arnold

the recipient to spend two years abroad studying the great art of Europe.

Irwin's brother Arnold described the expedition: "For 2 1/2 years Irwin wandered over the highways and byways of Europe and northern Africa . . . studying the old masters intensively, copying their works in museums. . . . He became thoroughly grounded in the traditions of the past, but at the same time he was keenly alive to the modern trend of painting, discerning in it a spirit and regeneration which greatly influenced his development."

Irwin's own account of those years was more succinct: "They were wonderful times. . . . Paris was full of young artists and Russian refugees . . . everyone was acting crazy and having a swell time. . . . Days were devoted to copying at the Louvre and working in various ateliers . . . but even more time was devoted to raising a beard, a moustache, and a Lot of Hell." Admittedly some of the photographs in our collection which show dancing on shipboard, strolling in natty attire with Josef Presser along a Brussels boulevard, and the accounts of activities with fellow scholarship winners Aiden Ripley and Bernard Keyes, bear out Irwin's version of the story quite well.

Unfortunately, very few other records of this period survive: only one sketchbook (which is on exhibit), and a number of loose drawings; but, sadly, none of the watercolors survive which were done in Spain, where he had met up with fellow Boston artist Gordon Cutler. These two men spent many happy weeks sharing an open touring car, driving into the Spanish countryside with easels, paints, bread, and ample supplies of wine.

On his return to this country Hoffman settled in New York City, close to his present sunlit studio which he has kept since the early 1930's on West 74th Street. Once there, he concentrated for a time on portraiture, and on some very serious work on his newly acquired etching press. (Incidentally, he later sold this press to sculptor David Smith, who used it, to Irwin's dismay, to press metal for his sculptures.)

The stimulation of his recent travels was not forgotten, and Irwin made a number of subsequent trips to Europe. On his return from one of these he met on board ship Dorothea Geyer, who was a personal



Hoffman as Musician

assistant to Felix Warburg, and who became Mrs. Irwin Hoffman two years later in 1930.

The next year Irwin accompanied his mother on her first return to her Russian homeland. It was an emotional and shocking trip for them both. For two months Hoffman traveled the countryside, meeting distant relatives, visiting small villages, cruising up and down the somber Volga River, looking, listening, and sketching furtively, usually at night. His photographs and sketches and his subsequent watercolors were published in the *New York Evening Post* of March 1930, along with Irwin's article, "Impressions of Russia." Its publication created a disconcerted but terribly interested stir in the American public, which was itself beginning to experience the sobering impact of the Depression.

By now Irwin's interests had expanded far beyond his initial concentration on portraiture, partly due to his extensive travels, but primarily by virtue of the growing involvement of two surviving brothers, Arnold and Robert, in mining. In order to better understand their industry, Irwin gamely accompanied them on numerous claim-staking expeditions into all regions of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, frequently backpacking for days into the bush, barely stopping to make camp at night. On one of these early expeditions Arnold wrote with amusement in his journal about young Irwin's struggles under the heavy gear. Irwin, however, soon gained the total respect of the men of the mines, as well as that of the inhabitants of the communities in the mining regions. When not below ground in miner's gear, Hoffman roamed the countryside widely, sketching, and talking with the people, the sharecroppers in North Carolina. In so doing, he earned their trust and respect. The rapport he developed with his subjects allowed him to depict startlingly intimate details in the lives of these remote people, as when he held a young miner's child entranced on the sagging porch of her North Carolina mountain shack, or in the famous canvas entitled "Mine Tragedy."

Hoffman's determination to bring this same kind of intimacy to the labors taking place below ground led him down mine shafts throughout North America. The hundreds of sketches, oils, and prints resulting reflect a startling technological accuracy (for the sake of his broth-



Portrait of artist's mother, Minna Aronson Hoffman



Self-portrait

ers) as well as the artist's eye on the very personalized aspects of this subterranean culture. Many of these works were widely exhibited and published and received numerous awards, such as "Taking a Fiver," "Cigarette Underground," and the etched version "Mining Tragedy." An excellent collection of Hoffman's mining works can be seen at the Arnold and Robert Hoffman Geological Laboratories at Harvard.

It therefore came as no surprise that Irwin Hoffman was commissioned to paint a massive series of murals depicting the History of Mining for the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. A separate building was created to house the murals which were considered a *tour de force* by both the scientific and art worlds of the time. To review quickly:



Robert D. Hoffman

PANEL 1: depicts the three early developmental stages of mining.

Upper Left: a group of Piltown miners working stopes for flint. As far as we know, this is the earliest recorded mining operation in the history of man (about 50,000–125,000 years ago).

Upper Right: the beginning of the iron age. The Cave Man discovers that iron from meteors can be recovered and fabricated into implements.

Lower Half: panel showing the first smelting and casting operations of primitive man . . . and we find ourselves in the Bronze Age.

PANEL 2: the mining and metallurgical operations of the Egyptians who left behind excellent descriptions of their mining methods in bas reliefs and hieroglyphic accounts.

PANEL 3: the mining methods used by the ancient Greeks and Romans which were followed for centuries until the use of gunpowder. A fire was kindled against the face of the rock until it reached a certain intensity; then the rock was doused with water, causing it to crack.

PANEL 4: placer mining is indicated in its various phases from the two '49ers panning nuggets from the stream in the foreground, to "Rocking" in lower left hand corner, hydraulicking, and—finally—dredging.

PANEL 5: modern mining and reducing operations. Here we see drilling into the rockface, two men loading drill holes for blasting. In center, ore is being drawn from stopes through ore chutes and loaded onto cars.

PANEL 6: a somewhat ironic painting. It serves as a summary of the story of man and metals. The miner holds a piece of the ore which made possible all that surrounds him, from the modern city, the ocean liner, the streamlined train, the automobile, the turbine, radio, the movies. Overhead one sees the plane, but quite noticeable in the lower left is the anti-aircraft battery manned by a crew in gas masks. The irony of this tribute to technology implies that civilization has reached the crossroads. Will the process of development and construction outstrip the forces of destruction? (illus. p. 24)

These murals are now on permanent display at the Colorado School of Mines, Golden, Colorado.

While traveling with his brothers to mine sites in Mexico, Hoffman became captivated by the spirit, colors, smells, and sounds of the Mexican land and its people. He returned time and again to indulge



History of Mining: Modern Times

his senses and to fill countless sketchbooks. It is clear that he won their love and respect as much as they had won his.

Jose Miguel Bejerano, then head of the Mexican Chamber of Commerce, wrote publicly of Hoffman's paintings:

In Hoffman concur the painter, the journalist, the sociologist, and last, but not least, the poet. Temporarily transplanted into Mexican land, he nourished with the juices of its soil, and he flourished true Mexican blossoms. His heart took profound roots in the history, tradition and idiosyncrasy of the Mexican people. Promptly and wholeheartedly he identified himself with them. Mexico keeps no secret from Mr. Hoffman.

The fascination with man's closeness to the soil extended to trips to Puerto Rico and Cuba. Here, as in Mexico, Hoffman was struck by the dignity and spirit of these people whom he went to great lengths to know, and to depict accurately and well. In a manuscript entitled "With Irwin Hoffman in Puerto Rico," Ada Corson of the Polytechnic Institute described the young Puerto Rican students' adoration of the artist.

They have gone with him into the cane fields where Hoffman has sketched the men at their hoeing, their planting, their cutting. They have seen that an artist works hard at his art, that he wears overalls and crawls under fences to sketch an "jibaro" at work, that he will kneel in the dirt for an hour to make a record of a face, a head, toil-worn hands and bending backs. They have been a little surprised to hear him say how beautiful are these dusky skins, these shining eyes, and they begin to see beauty in familiar things.

With the coming of the war, Hoffman was thrust into yet another role. Terribly eager to serve his country, but recuperating from recent back surgery, Hoffman reported, in full back-cast, to Camp LeJeune where he went through the entire maneuvers in order to produce "Navy Medicine in Pictures" which had been commissioned by Abbott Laboratories. Hoffman's original sketchbooks and photographs made for this project are now in this Library's collections. He also volunteered his services to numerous causes, including Artists for Victory, for whom he headed the War Poster Program. He donated much time and art work to raise money for the Red Cross, and he

daily devoted several hours to sketching the war wounded in military hospitals and then had these portraits sent home to their families.

He was an outspoken commentator on the war, and much of his art which was not done for the American war effort reflected his harsh feelings and included a number of political cartoons which were widely published, as well as this famous print entitled: "Suffer not the Children to Come Unto Me, for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," subtitled "The United Nations, 1947," in which one can recognize most of the world leaders of the day.

After the war he returned to quieter and more personal pursuits, doing portraits of prominent figures in various fields of endeavor: in music: Pierre Monteux; the military: Admiral Frank Leamy of the U.S. Coast Guard; the law: Justice Felix Frankfurter; science: Dr. Béla Schick, originator of the Schick test for diphtheria; politics: David Ben-Gurion; religion: Cardinal Spellman.

Postwar summers were spent at the family's Cavendish, Vermont farm, where he kept his printing press active, and did leisurely watercolors of the neighbors, among them Talcky Howard, who was a classmate of Calvin Coolidge, and of the lush countryside around the farm.

In the late 1970's the Cavendish property was sold to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and this is the scene the author this week must be enjoying from his window. Some years earlier Irwin and Dorothea had purchased a property in Woodstock, Vermont from the widow of artist Rockwell Kent. With this delightful farmhouse and pond came Kent's huge, but chilly studio barn, to which Hoffman has added heat and a full-scale photo darkroom. The adjacent five-carriage garage has been converted into a workshop where Irwin makes the fine stringed instruments, of which he is justifiably proud. In this workshop also stands the massive etching press to which Mr. Hoffman has recently returned with renewed enthusiasm, and as you can see, vigor.

Certainly the salubrious effects of the environment on the artist can be seen in the large numbers of Vermont-inspired works in the exhibition, perhaps, most notably, in the many wonderful watercolors in the lobby cases of both buildings, and throughout the third floor exhibition rooms.



Arnold Hoffman



Ensign David Hoffman, USNR



History of Medicine

But dyed-in-the-wool mural painters do not apparently rest easily just painting watercolors during Vermont summers. In 1975 Hoffman completed a massive mural series depicting the History of Medicine.

As we see here in **PANEL 1**: the figures represent the significant contributions to medicine from Egypt, early Greece, the Christian Era, the Renaissance, and the Age of Science.

PANEL 2: medicine moves from the empirical to the scientific, note the surgeons and scientists, country doctors and researchers, technologists, dentists, and educators whose crucial discoveries were made possible, in most cases, through the perfection of earlier theories. Thoroughly researched, it is a complex work, to which justice cannot be done here.

These murals currently hang in the Mary Hitchcock Hospital in Hanover, New Hampshire, to which Hoffman donated them in appreciation of the excellent medical services rendered members of his family.

This devotion of three years to saying “thank you” with a mural is typical of this generous man of many passions. Certain of these passions have remained consistent throughout his life and are reflected in his works: the closeness and loyalty of his family; the love of music as



Robert D. Hoffman as Prospector



Bronze of artist's father Jacob Hillel Hoffman



Dorothea Geyer Hoffman (the artist's wife)

reflected in his own playing, making of instruments, and his portraits of exceptionally large numbers of musicians; his compassion for the unfortunate; his fascination with man's relation to the soil; and above all, his love and respect for the State of Israel.

This last is perhaps the best example of the degree to which Irwin Hoffman is willing to support a passion. In February of this year Jerusalem celebrated the dedication of the Minna Aronson Hoffman Auditorium, a magnificent concert hall given by Irwin in memory of his mother. It is built on the grounds of the girls' orphanage to which Hoffman has sent many of his hand-crafted instruments, as well as considerable financial support and works of art.

Irwin David Hoffman, painter, printmaker, sculptor, photographer, musician, and maker of stringed instruments, a man who has led a full and fascinating life. We are grateful that he, like most of us, has accumulated a life record of sorts through his souvenirs, and correspondence, photographs, clippings, journals, sketchbooks, and odd bits of ephemera. In viewing this fascinating range of oddments, we glimpse, beyond his art, the variety and richness of the career of this energetic, complex, and very talented man, a man, as you can see, who is not without a sense of humor: this is "Self-Portrait of the Artist As Moses."

IRWIN HOFFMAN

AN ADVENTURE IN SELF-EDUCATION

Sinclair Hitchings

IN 1924 a prospectus for a portfolio of six etchings, by six American artists, appeared in *The New Republic*. The artists were Ernest Haskell, Peggy Bacon, John Marin, Kenneth Hayes Miller, Edward Hopper, and John Sloan. *The New Republic* said of them, "The etchers represented are outstanding leaders in their field. They are of no one school. They are neither all 'modern' nor all 'conservative.' They were selected chiefly because of their Americanness and their wide range. The work of no one of them resembles that of another (either of this or of any other group). They are in the fullest and best sense, original and individual."

In 1924, Irwin Hoffman, at twenty-three, was in Europe on a Paige Traveling Scholarship awarded by the Boston Museum. He had been educated in the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Museum School, and, we record with pride, the Boston Public Library. At twenty-three, he was still in the beginnings of his career, but the words of *The New Republic* provide an admirable text today as we look at his career: his Americanness, his wide range, his originality and individuality. In Boston it is a pleasure to remember that Boston nurtured his talent, but he very quickly emerged as his own best teacher. And what energy! "Hoffman was everywhere," his Museum School classmate Horrigan recalled recently of their school days.

We see Hoffman's art today against the backdrop of a booming market in American art and an outpouring of books. A great deal of ink has been spilled over the question, "What is American in American art?" but this is not even a question for Hoffman and many of his

contemporaries. We recognize their art as having a genuinely American voice. Instead of belaboring that characteristic, we should turn at once to the larger characteristic which is also easy to see: the universality of his art, the kinship of calling and mission with so many other artists. Thomas Hart Benton's art bears the tag Regionalist, but here is what Benton wrote in 1946 about Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry, beginning with the particular, ending with the universal: "Together we stood for things which most artists do not believe in. We stood for an art whose forms and meanings would have direct and easily comprehended relevance for the American culture of which we were by blood and daily life a part. In spite of the deficiencies of that culture and of our inclusion of some of these in our arts, we did not believe this stand separated us from the world family of artists. It was our belief, in fact, that it would best enable us to join them. We hoped to build our 'universals' out of the particularities of our own times and our own places, out of the substances of our actual lives as most of the great artists of the world's past have done."

It is gradually sinking into our understanding that between 1910 and 1940 something extraordinary happened in American art. There was the sense of excitement, the strong currents, which mark any great period. Can you imagine *Harper's Magazine* today commissioning six original prints from six American artists and offering them as a portfolio to readers? Irwin Hoffman was fortunate to be at work in the Twenties and Thirties when American artists had such a broad sense of mission, a sense he has never lost—a desire to draw, to paint in watercolors and oils, to paint murals, to make etchings and lithographs. There is a sense in these years of what Thomas Craven unrestrainedly called "blasts of native energy." There is a sense of richness of talent—of hundreds of artists reaching upward and outward. Irwin Hoffman propelled himself into the big experiences of the times—the mural painting, the etching boom, the W.P.A. art program, the democratic thrust.

I have had the privilege, in the course of the current retrospective here of Hoffman's work, of talking to him about his art. He is right when he says an artist works so much within himself, so much alone. But I do not necessarily agree that that private life would be uninter-

esting to us on the outside. He gives us insight when he says that somehow the artist must retain and nourish his sensibility, his responsiveness, his vision. And somehow he must reach out to the world to aid and abet the distribution of his work. He must live, in the down-to-earth as well as the spiritual sense; he must sell pictures, earn dollars, and buy bread.

With the exhibitions upstairs, and in between the slides of my fellow speakers, I've chosen a Biblical seven illustrations to conclude this talk.

Volga Peasants, 1929

I know of nothing in American printmaking like the etchings which Irwin Hoffman harvested from his travels in Russia in 1929. In them, light catches the forms and faces of sleeping people surrounded by darkness. There's a great poignancy and also a great simplicity of design and strength of modeling in these prints.

Cactus and Tortillas, 1933-35 (illus. p. 58)

One of the words which critics used to describe Hoffman's prints was "rhythm." You can see that characteristic in *Cactus and Tortillas*, etched in 1933-35 as a result of his Mexican experiences. There's also a tender feeling here that reflects his great responsiveness to people.

Drilling In Ore, 1937

Drilling In Ore dates from 1937-38. Hoffman's etchings of scenes in the mines are very rich in color and complex in technique. They have strength of light and dark and strength of design.

The Stoker, 1936

One of my personal favorites among Hoffman's prints is *The Stoker*, etched in 1936. Several of his prints have as their subjects single standing figures. The starkness of this hollow-eyed man conveys as well as any work of art I know the dignity and the impact of work.

Dan Segundo, 1943 (illus. p. 50)

At the Boston Museum currently there's an exhibition, "The Boston Tradition," which emphasizes portraiture all the way back to John Smibert, and portraiture is a great theme in Irwin Hoffman's work.

But one great omission of the show at the Museum is that they don't devote a room or two to watercolors, starting with Winslow Homer and going on through John Singer Sargent and Dodge MacKnight and other great watercolorists. This American watercolor is not something that has any European equivalent. This is American and a very affectionate character study of an immense man named Dan Segundo, who appears in several other works in the exhibition.

Autumn in Vermont (illus. p. 67)

Although European watercolors can be very broad in design, I can find no European equivalents for this marvelously free and virile American style of watercolor. Irwin Hoffman has said of watercolor that the best watercolors are really the ones you never finish; but whether this is finished or not, it has a tremendous breadth and sweep and sureness of handling.

Sky and Water (illus. p. 92)

One final picture, painted at Nantucket, but universal in its feeling. I have no artistic abilities myself, but I always have been in love with watercolor and I have a particular envy of the command of watercolor you can see here.

I think the Boston Public Library is incredibly fortunate to have handed to it in a most generous fashion materials which constitute an artist's life story. One of my deepest interests is biography and autobiography, and I wish that Irwin Hoffman were a little less reticent because he is wonderfully articulate. There are chapters of his life like the trip to Russia which really need to be retold in reminiscences which he should dictate.

I would like to say again on behalf of the Library that we are very lucky to see this material here—and it's a great privilege to exhibit it.

IRWIN D. HOFFMAN

HIS ART IN HIS TIMES

Mahonri Sharp Young

IRWIN D. HOFFMAN, who was born in 1901, has been going strong as an artist for more than fifty years. He attained maturity quickly, and has maintained his youth and vigor to an amazing extent. It is a remarkable career, which is still developing.

People over-glamorize the Twenties, but for Irwin Hoffman they were a period of opportunity, when to be young was very heaven. Everything was possible, and all good things came true. America was a land of promises which were kept. We fervently hope that is still the case.

Irwin Hoffman was born in East Boston, of Jewish immigrant parents who did everything possible for their children. They sent three of their four sons to Harvard, which would have been quite impossible in Russia. Irwin's artistic gifts were picked out when he was still in high school, and he was sent to the Boston School of the Museum of Fine Arts as a special student; in 1916 he became a full-time student, on a full scholarship. These were great days at the Museum School, with which Tarbell, Philip Hale, Joseph DeCamp, Frank Benson, Charles Grafly, and William Paxton had been or were associated. Hoffman idolized these men, and he should be pleased that they are now coming back into favor. Most of these artists were portrait painters, and during his six years at the School Hoffman was known as a prodigy of portraiture.

The Twenties may have been wonderful in this country, but the ambition of most American artists was to go to Europe to study and stay as long as they could. By Europe they generally meant France, for

not only did they consider Paris the center of civilization, but the rate of exchange was fabulously favorable to Americans. In 1924, when Hoffman won the Paige Traveling Scholarship, the School's highest award, he naturally headed for Europe, where he had the time of his life. He traveled all over the place—Africa, Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Holland, England, and Spain, which was not on the regular route then—and he spent time in Paris, you can be sure, where he lived like a prince, or at least like a student prince. In those days, any American was a millionaire, and Hoffman spent his travel years in a state of euphoria. Paris was not only the center of the art world, it was the center of the American art world as well, for there must have been as many American artists in Paris as there were in the United States. Boston was full of Paris fever which had been raging ever since the days of William Morris Hunt.

When Hoffman returned to this country in 1927 he held an exhibition in Boston which was very well received. After his father's death in 1927 he moved to New York where he has had his studio ever since. He felt that he could make his way against the best men the country had to offer. He had every reason to be confident.

In 1929 he traveled to Russia with his brother Arnold and his wife and mother. It was a sentimental journey for his mother, but not for Irwin, who saw a side of Russia—the underside—which few Americans ever see. He was appalled at the poverty and the degradation. He had no illusions about Russia, then or afterwards. He had the greatest sympathy for the people, as he did for the poor and downtrodden everywhere; they formed, indeed, his principal subject-matter. When Hoffman's Russian work was exhibited in New York in 1930, it made a strong impression; in fact, it made many enemies among the leftist artists in New York. It had the ring of truth. Here was the Russian reality. Hoffman's reputation took a great jump; he was a very well-known man in his twenties, before most men get started.

He had a real gift for being first on the ground. He went to Mexico long before it was popular. His Mexican peasants seem to have more fun than their Russian brothers, but that was probably true. Hoffman's view of Mexico was completely unpolitical; there are few references to the Revolution in his work. Hoffman's Mexico is the Mexico

everybody loves. The exhibition of his Mexican work in New York was another huge success. Why not? He had the great gift of sympathy, and a real knack for the picturesque.

Two of Hoffman's brothers had become mining engineers, whom he accompanied on their claim-staking trips all over Canada and the West. He went down into the mines and became a great admirer of the courageous and sinewy men who work there. Hoffman had made etchings of Mexican subjects, and his etchings of miners were just as great a hit, for in the Thirties the working man was idolized in a way of which we have little conception.

People like to pretend that the Thirties were a period of brotherly love, but among the artists this closeness took the form of civil war. Hoffman managed to stay moderately clear of the political infighting of those days, perhaps because he was more interested in the working man than he was in Labor. Despite his subject-matter, it is fair to say that his sympathies were not on the Left. Hoffman has always been very much his own man, going his own way.

World War II affected Hoffman deeply; his beloved brother had been lost while serving with the Coast Guard in the First World War and Hoffman tried very hard to enlist in the Second, but he had to content himself with joining the staff of Artists for Victory. He mounted the National Poster Contest for War Posters which toured the country and contributed valuable posters for the armed services.

The influence of other artists in his time had always been minimal. He revered Eugene Higgins, now unfairly neglected, as his spiritual and artistic godfather; but the influence was not stylistic, for Higgins' color was dark, while Hoffman's was usually exuberant. He always worshipped his teachers at the Museum School, and after World War II he went back to painting portraits, very much in their tradition.

He is still very active in this field, and he still has his New York studio to work in. But he spends a lot of time at his place in Vermont, painting the countryside and the people who live there, printing his etchings, working at his photography, and making extremely fine stringed instruments, which he gives to gifted musical students in Israel. He is as active as ever, and who knows what new careers lie before him?

COMMENTS BY IRWIN D. HOFFMAN

AT RECEPTION, WIGGIN GALLERY,
SEPTEMBER 23, 1981

TO PARAPHRASE Gilbert & Sullivan, an artist's life is not an easy one. There are so many changes that happened in my life, my period as an artist. . . . The Depression. . . . I was a Depression Baby. . . . You couldn't sell anything. You couldn't sell a postage stamp for what it was. . . . It was really a bad time. I have to thank my wife and my brothers who kept me from starving to death. Back in the Thirties we had an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art and the Curator of the Buffalo Museum said, "Mr. Hoffman, your prints are going to be collector's items, people are going to scour the country to attempt to find them," and I said, "Well, I hope they do before I starve to death."

If it weren't for Roosevelt and a few of his people who today are called "God-damned Liberals," there wouldn't have been anything produced in the Depression, and I must say that the whole art scene was saved by the munificence of the government at that time. Of course it didn't last very long because the Communists got hold of the whole business. They had a device called the Artists Union and put all these freeloaders and untalented people in this thing and just packed the artists' W.P.A. program with all these worthless people. Then a disgusted Roosevelt appointed his friend Colonel Somervell at that time, it was about 1938, to try to clear up the mess in the W.P.A. Colonel Somervell appointed a committee of some of the artists who were well known. Believe it or not, I was well known in the Thirties. All applicants had to pass three committees, and if they couldn't, they

were thrown out. Well, the Communists couldn't stand that, and at one meeting they insulted Colonel Somervell and called him a fascist and an American Hitler and all the abuse they could muster. This went on for about an hour or so and at a given signal they all rose and left the room. Some of the most prominent painters in New York were part of this thing—I won't mention their names, but they were a disgrace. At this time I was the only one who dared or cared to oppose the Communists by refuting all the lies they gave out to the press. I prepared an answer which was to be printed in the *Art Digest*. The editor Mr. Boswell and I first showed it to Colonel Somervell to edit before publication. And when Colonel Somervell saw it at that time, he was quite overcome and he literally wept—really, he did. Tears came to his eyes and he said, "Hoffman, you're a very courageous man." I said, "Why?" and he said, "Because you're the only one who's come to my defense."

The war broke, and Colonel Somervell became General Somervell, three-star General and head of the Service of Supply. My brother Arnold at that time was a specialist in iron and metallurgy; he was a graduate of Harvard. The Japanese had taken up all the scrap in this country in their war against the Chinese, having no scrap for their furnaces to make steel; and the steel mills here were in a hell of a mess; and we had to rebuild a navy; we had to do all the logistics needed for war. I took brother Arnold down to see General Somervell. Arnold was expert in a new steel-making metallurgy called beneficiation that reduced the need of scrap in the steel furnaces. He and my brother Arnold, within a year, had the steel companies beneficiating iron for the steel mills which enabled them to make steel with very little scrap and possibly saved us from a disaster. And that little incident in my life as an artist—my getting to know General Somervell—is not in the history books, but went a long way to insure victory over the Japs and the Germans.

Well, to go on with this tale of woe, after the war was over, most of the institutions, like the Carnegie and all the rest, had great exhibitions, and they were in the hands of people who favored abstract painting. We of the Thirties were practically eliminated; we couldn't get into a Carnegie show or any large show at that time. That's when I

started to do portraits. Well, I had very good training at the Boston Museum. I went there for seven years. Being a very stubborn guy, I never forgot what I learned, and refused to accept the prevailing nonsense of that period. I believe I painted some credible portraits then. In that period, I made oh, \$10,000 a year. A streetsweeper wouldn't look at that today, but in those days, in the Forties, that was a great deal of money for a portrait painter. And so it went.

But I was never really appreciated, as I am here today at the Boston Public Library. And I told Mr. McNiff, "You shouldn't call this exhibition a retrospective exhibition; we should call it the 'Resurrection of Irwin Hoffman!'" The Boston Public Library is probably the catalyst for a new era of art, because the art specialists here are the ones who have saved from extinction that whole period of the Depression and its aftermath from complete oblivion. Here in this library the works of the men of that period are being kept and can be seen and studied.

And I want to say another thing. When I was a student, I haunted this library. This is one of the great sources of information and research. When I studied anatomy, it was here I copied Dr. Rimmer, da Vinci, da Vinci's silverpoints . . . Ingres for drawing . . . it was here, it was always at the public library, and I think it is one of the greatest institutions in the country.

I want to say this: to Philip McNiff, Sinclair Hitchings, and Tess Cederholm, and all the rest, we owe a great deal of gratitude. Without such people and institutions of this kind, depositories of the great things of other generations, this country would go straight to hell, and I mean it. With the flood of the subculture and ignorance that one gets through television, the media, and all the rest of the superficial things that are going on, these institutions—Harvard, this library, and such places that are oases around the country—can save this country from becoming a nation of morons and idiots.

RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION

OF THE WORKS OF IRWIN D. HOFFMAN
WITH COMMENTARY BY THE ARTIST

MINERS AND MINING

The oils were the result of sketches I made when I was preparing material for the mining murals for the San Francisco World's Fair in 1938.

Drillers in Stope Oil on canvas :: $32\frac{1}{2} \times 26\frac{1}{2}$:: Harvard (illus.)

A very big stope . . . with scaffolding. See the miner up on the scaffolding . . . and the drillers behind him. To prepare for that thing is almost like putting up a building.

Stoping Oil on canvas :: 34×22 :: Harvard

Words cannot explain the mysterious and unreal quality of the world underground. It is a mixture of the dramatic and the ominous; it is felt rather than visual.

Bench Stope Oil on canvas :: 26×32 :: Harvard

A bench stope is the most hazardous of all stope mining. The miner is suspended by a rope tied to a ladder while he drills underground. Should he slip or the ladder give way, it's a fall of 200 or 300 feet. The ladder is only held by that one iron strut you see there.

Miner on the Grizzly Oil on canvas :: $24 \times 38\frac{1}{4}$:: Harvard

The grizzly is the area between the stope and the underground crusher that is



Drillers in Stope

latticed with these 12 x 12 beams, as you see. As the ore comes crashing down from the stope where it is blasted by dynamite, the miner there with the pneumatic hammer has the job of breaking up the ore so it'll go through this gauge and into the crusher. This particular miner was all alone when I sketched him. There were supposed to be two men on this grizzly at all times in the event of an accident, and help is needed. It is the law. To be alone when the ore comes down is very dangerous and it is easy to get caught. We learned that two weeks after my sketch he was caught and killed. This was at the famous Noranda Mine in Canada.

Pulling the Ore Oil on canvas :: 30 x 26 :: Harvard (illus.)

When the ore comes down from the stope. This man here has an iron bar with which he opens up the bin releasing the ore that comes down the chute into that car. A very important part of the operation, and very dangerous.

Lunch Underground with Artist Oil on canvas :: 32 x 34 :: Harvard (illus.)

. . . like Raphael—he always put himself in his paintings; I'm the fourth one in. This is a very good picture of the way men gather at lunchtime.

Riding the Bucket Oil on canvas :: 34 x 26 :: Harvard

That's me there on the right, poised on the edge of the bucket. You drop about 300 or 400 feet. As the bucket turns around on the descent, it bounces you around the sides of the shaft. You must hold on for dear life.

Drilling in Ore Oil on canvas :: 36 x 30 :: Harvard

I made an etching of this . . . it's very typical of a stope.

Drilling in Ore 1937–38 :: Etching :: 13⁷/₈ x 10⁹/₁₆

This was up at Noranda Mine in Canada. It was a great copper mine. I went down every morning for two months and sketched in preparation for the murals I did for the San Francisco World's Fair in 1938 which eventually were given to the Colorado School of Mining at Golden, Colorado.

Drilling in Ore Etching :: 3 x 5



Pulling the Ore



Lunch Underground with Artist

Two Thousand Foot Level 1937–38 :: Etching :: $10^{15}/16 \times 7/8$

Two thousand feet is nothing in a mine, but I had to give it some kind of title. But that's the way it looks, especially in a Mexican mine where the conditions are not as well worked out as in the mines in Canada. You wouldn't have a manhole and a stope—the whole thing is the same area. When they blasted here all the ore would go right down through that manhole.

Rocks and Men 1937–38 :: Etching :: $13^{7}/8 \times 10^{5}/8$

Etching made from sketches done for the San Francisco murals.

Shrinkage Stope 1937–38 :: Etching :: $8 \times 10\frac{7}{8}$

“Shrinkage stope” is another name for a stope, wherever they are. They’re mining on an incline and it’s not a very large cavity that they’re working on. And he’s probably following the ore, then they put a shot of powder there, and all this drops out. Then this man here shovels it down into the chute.

Miner mid 1930’s :: Watercolor :: $22\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$:: Harvard

Painted in the western US during the artist’s trips there during the mid-Thirties.

Dan Segundo 1943 :: Watercolor :: $26\frac{7}{8} \times 14\frac{3}{4}$:: (illus.)

Dan Segundo, an Indian, was one of the roustabouts that worked on a calcite property in the Borrego Desert in southern California. The story of this is fantastic: when the war broke out, we were completely unprepared. The only place where you could get calcite was in Iceland called Iceland Spar, and there was very little of it there. It was to be used for a gun sight for World War II. But Dr. Harry Berman, who was the curator of the geological museum at Harvard, had a specimen in his collection that came from California, and he traced the donor through which they found a source of calcite. It was located in the Borrego Desert near the Salton Sea five hundred feet below sea level, a murderous place with temperatures reaching 150°F .

Dan Segundo must’ve weighed 300 pounds, and I think his head weighed 200! He was so powerful. They gave him a tent with a cot in it; but he weighed so much that the cot collapsed; and they had to build a special one for him. He was a sweet and gentle man whom we all grew to like.

The famous story about Dan was that some of the technical things went wrong—I don’t know whether it was a car or machinery—and Dan fixed it. And my brother Arnold said to him, “Dan, where did you learn to do this?” He said, “At school.” “Where did you go to school?” He says, “At San Quentin.” Apparently his story and history was common in that area of California.

Portrait of a Young Man 1943 :: Watercolor :: $21\frac{3}{16} \times 15$

This is one of the young roustabouts . . . a boy from the South. Our camp in the desert attracted mostly the draftdodgers, criminals, and anyone that was trying to get away from the law and the draft; and consequently we had a curious mix of the underbelly of America. And to guard the camp the gov-



Dan Segundo

ernment delegated a squad of Marines for security. They were mostly kids, mostly around eighteen or twenty.

Study of a Young Marine 1943 :: Watercolor :: 21 1/2 x 14 15/16

A young Marine, in '43. My brothers and I went out to California to mine a rare crystal called calcite which was indigenous to Iceland called Iceland Spar. This crystal was the main ingredient for a gun sight invented by Professor Harry Berman of Harvard in collaboration with Edwin Land of Polaroid. They devised a gun sight that could be used in battle whereby, no matter what position your head was in in relation to the sight, there was no distortion, and you could calibrate the time it took a plane (a kamikaze, for instance) at the outside ring to get into the center. It was used in the Battle of Midway, and it was the first time our Navy was able to head off the kamikaze planes. It changed the whole fortune of the war in the Pacific.

As I observed, to protect the mine the government gave us a squad of Marines. This boy was one of the kids from the bayous of Louisiana. He was so slow in everything he did that we nicknamed him "Lightnin." One day I said to him—he used to carry my painting material around for me; at that time I had a very bad back and could hardly carry anything—and I said to him, "Lightnin, how on earth did you get into the Marines?" "Well," he says, "I was fishin' with my pappy, and I got tired of just lyin' there waitin' for the fish to bite, so I thought I'd go in town. I went to town, and there was a recruitin' office for the Marines. This guy came out and said to me, 'Come on in and join the Marines.' And I said, 'What have you got to offer?'" "So," he says, "That's how I joined."

Cecil of Guadalcanal 1942 :: Etching :: 10 3/4 x 7 7/8

Cecil was one of the Marines out there in California; he was my protégé and special friend. I did this etching after I had had an operation on my back. I couldn't move, so I sat down and made this print. Cecil went on to Okinawa and lost his right arm. He came home, married, and named his first child after me. Would you believe it?

Taking a Fiver 1940 :: Etching :: 13 7/8 x 10 3/4

"Taking a fiver" was the term used when miners stopped for a rest. The time to smoke a cigarette was about five minutes and so it was called "taking a fiver." That's a very good print, by the way. You know, John Taylor Arms,

who was the head of the Society of American Etchers, gave me his special prize in 1940. He said to me, "Irwin, I loved the way you used aquatint in this plate." And I said, "John, you should know better than that; I never used aquatint in my life. That's all line." All that is line, and it's just bitten for maybe thirty seconds for the delicate modeling.

Portrait of a Young Man 1943 :: Watercolor :: $21\frac{7}{16} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$

He certainly is typical of the boys that were roaming the country and trying to get out of the War. It was out in the Borrego Desert where my brothers were mining calcite. Right below Indio. Indio was the place—you remember we had a New York mayor named O'Dwyer. His brother Paul became the head of the City Council in New York years later. It seems that every month Mayor O'Dwyer would arrive in Indio to visit his brother who would take care of the contents that the Mayor carried in a little black bag. The black bag of Mayor O'Dwyer became famous.

Cigarette Underground 1938 :: Etching :: $10\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{15}{16}$:: (illus.)

Selected as one of "50 Prints of the Year" by the Society of American Etchers, 1938 and by the *New York Times*.

Conversation Piece Watercolor :: $5\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{1}{2}$

Two Indians in deep conversation. They worked on the calcite project conducted by my brothers in the Borrego Desert in California.

Miner Sta. Barbara, Mexico Watercolor :: 22×15 :: Harvard

This miner, refused clearance by government regulation to work in the American mine of which brother Arnold was President, worked in an abandoned mine of his company which was leased by a Mexican. Rules were made to protect miners from Americans, not Mexicans.

Mexican Miner 1933 :: Etching :: $7\frac{5}{7} \times 3\frac{7}{8}$

This is a faithful depiction of the condition of a Mexican miner. He doesn't wear any boots; he wears sandals. The conditions under which he works, no American would ever allow. I sketched him right there as he was coming out of a little stope where he was shoveling some of the muck. A stope, you know, is an area where they break the ore; and it is then, by gravity, brought down to an area where it goes into the cars, and then to the mill.



Cigarette Underground

Ave Maria 1933-35 :: Soft ground etching :: $8^{15}/_{16} \times 10^{15}/_{16}$

Before a Mexican miner started work underground, he was so apprehensive, never knowing what was going to happen to him that he prayed to the Virgin to protect him from harm. All through the mine the miners had set up these shrines. And I caught them before they went into the workings. Now you couldn't see anything more devout than these men praying.

Mining Tragedy 1937-38 :: Etching :: $7^{3}/_{4} \times 10^{7}/_{8}$

An episode that happens too often in mining. This was a W.P.A. print.

Miner at Rest 1937 :: Etching :: $10^{7}/_{8} \times 7^{7}/_{8}$

This etching won First Prize, the Mrs. Henry F. Noyes Prize by the Society of American Etchers, 1937.

Coal Town Watercolor and black chalk :: $14^{13}/_{16} \times 21^{9}/_{16}$

This is Coal Town. I remember one of my classmates came from Hazelton, Pennsylvania, and I went down there one weekend. It is in the coal country. I had never seen such a dramatic and sordid landscape in my life as I did there. You can see the tailings that have been building up over the years, and people living right in the midst of all this rubbish. I developed a feeling of disgust for the coal industry of Pennsylvania at that time . . . that was in the early Twenties.

Miners Watercolor :: $14 \times 21^{3}/_{16}$

In West Virginia back in the period of the 1880's or 90's the miners did everything by hand. Also in 1930, using a hand drill, as you see, not pneumatic drills, and they had mules in this mine that moved the ore underground and that were never allowed out of the mine. They lived there. I made a sketch of this mine called a "dirty mine"; and that's where most of the terrible accidents happened, because there were no ventilation shafts in the mine as required by law. And this was back in the Thirties. I went down there with my brother Arnold, who was a mining engineer; and he couldn't believe that they worked under such awful conditions. Recent explosions in Kentucky and Illinois coal mines were probably the result of faulty ventilation. I did a canvas of one of these "dirty mines" that is both historic and prophetic. Apparently, with coal becoming so necessary for energy today, these mines

are being reopened and have no proper supervision. I believe you have a lithograph of mine on this subject.

Free Gold, the Story of Canadian Mining Book by Arnold Hoffman, and illustrated by Irwin D. Hoffman :: NY, Associated Book Service, 1947

My brother Arnold wrote *Free Gold* which I illustrated. It's out of print now, but someday I hope to have it re-published. My brother Arnold was one of the most extraordinary men in the history of mining. His book has become a classic in Canada. He knew everybody. I don't know how he remembered all the details of the history of the men who found and promoted the mines in Canada.

Here's mention of Harry Oakes. This is the metamorphosis of what happened to a miner. Harry Oakes came from Maine, a dour "Mainiac." I pictured him as a shade with all his money. He was a close friend of the Duke of Windsor and was murdered in Nassau. The story, never published in the press, was that he was murdered by the husband of the discarded mistress of the Duke, who turned her over to Oakes. You remember the French boy who married Oakes' daughter was accused but never convicted. Oakes in his early days bartered stock to anyone who would give him food and material for mining and so forth. Arnold tells the story of Hyman Kaplan who became a close friend of Oakes. Here Oakes is shown as a miner before he was knighted; and here, after he was knighted and became Sir Harry Oakes. When the painting of Sir Harry Oakes was shipped to Haileybury, that's in Northern Ontario, all the people in town were invited to the post office to view the portrait. He was painted as a Knight of the Garter, you see, and when this painting was taken out of the crate, everybody in town came to view it and had one great big guffaw.

The book is hard to get hold of. We could not find anybody in the Department of Geological Sciences at Harvard who would lend us one. Then finally we had to put some very, very heavy pressure on one of the professors, and he finally loaned us his copy.

Some of these illustrations are almost like cartoons. Here's Voltaire telling these two ridiculous French aristocrats that Canada is nothing but a patch of snow. With this *bon mot* he succeeded in convincing the French that Canada was of no importance and thus was mainly responsible for the English takeover, and changed the course of history. The French lost Canada in 1765—our revolution began in 1775.

MEXICO AND MEXICANS

Mexican Mother 1944 :: Etching :: $11\frac{7}{8} \times 8\frac{5}{8}$:: (illus.)

A real Mexican Madonna.

Mexican Child 1956 :: Watercolor :: $18\frac{15}{16} \times 13$

This was painted in a little town in the center of Mexico, in the mining/hill country. The Mexicans had leased the property that belonged to my brothers; and while they were up at the mine, I sketched this child.

Little Mexican 1933–35 :: Etching :: $7 \times 4\frac{15}{16}$

“Little Mexican” was a name for Mexicans in Guerrero; it’s a province outside of Mexico City where most of the revolutions started. There’s always a very suspicious looking quality about them, isn’t there? I just told him to sit down and not move—and he didn’t move.

Portrait of a Mexican Girl 1932 :: Watercolor :: $14\frac{7}{8} \times 21\frac{5}{8}$

This is a Mexican child. In those days—before they became too opulent and affluent—they didn’t have the attitude that every American was there to take advantage of them, you know. Years later when I was there, all they wanted was money if you took a snapshot. The mother would come chasing after you and demand four pesos or else.

Cactus and Tortillas 1933–35 :: Etching :: $4\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{3}{4}$:: (illus.)

That’s what you see all over. Children seem to be constantly with their mothers as in “Cactus and Tortillas” and “The Hen and Chick.” The relationship between mothers and daughters seems close and deep.

The Hen and Chick – Mexico 1933–35 :: Etching :: $10\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$:: (illus.)

Peasant Child near Taxco 1956 :: Watercolor :: $20 \times 14\frac{7}{8}$

Kids at a Carpa 1933–35 :: Etching :: $4 \times 7\frac{1}{8}$

Mexican children at the circus.



Mexican Mother



Cactus and Tortillas

El Arroyo 1933 :: Etching :: 6 x 8³/₄

They all use the streams for their washing and their water. However, they don't drink the water from streams if they can avoid it.

Village Laundry, Taxco 1932 :: Watercolor :: 15¹/₄ x 22¹/₂ :: Anonymous owner

The laundry was the social center of the village for these women . . . it was always colorful.

Women Washing Watercolor :: 14⁵/₁₆ x 19³/₄

This is down in Parral in Chihuahua. Not a very good watercolor. This is where Pancho Villa came from. They have these terribly dry periods, and their only source of water are these streams that are polluted and fetid. Yet they wash their clothes and everything there. I did this very quickly . . . I don't think this was more than ten minutes. I find that those watercolors that made a statement quickly really are more interesting than those that I try to finish.



The Hen and Chick – Mexico

Mexican Peasant on Burro 1933–35 :: Etching :: 5 x 3

Quite typical.

Ramon 1933–35 :: Etching :: 4 7/8 x 3

The children are quite self-reliant, much like street children. However, Ramon was very special.

Mexican Folk Band Etching :: 8 x 10 7/8

This so captures the bands. They play slowly for a funeral and quickly for a fiesta. When a player would tire, he sat down and took a rest as did the trombone player. Then the drummer would stop and the trombone would get up and join in again. It's all there. Banging away. Of course everyone plays out of tune.

El Troubadour 1933-35 :: Etching :: $7\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{7}{8}$

There's no question that the Mexican troubadour playing folk music is probably the worst in the world—nobody could compare with him!

La Cucaracha II 1935 :: Etching :: $7\frac{7}{8} \times 10\frac{3}{4}$

It means that I had done this theme on soft ground. This is an etching developed a bit more. See if you can find me (right-hand face in the left-hand corner). It's not a very good portrait, obviously.

Mexican Indian Watercolor :: $22\frac{1}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$

He was a Mexican Indian, not Mayan, but he came of a special tribe, the Tamarachi. They had escaped from the Spaniards in the seventeenth century and lived continuously in the mountains near Parral. When I was there with my brother Arnold in '56, they came out of the mountains because of famine, and they were literally starving. And they were going through the garbage that the Mexicans were throwing out in Parral. And they were, without question, the most beautiful people I've ever seen in my life. You can have no idea of the pure Indian. These were pure Indians—the Tamarachi. I saw whole families—can you imagine this?—with their hands tapping the glass of the storefronts. They had never seen anything like glass. They couldn't understand it. And whole families, a mother and father and the children feeling the glass. I should've taken some pictures of them, because this was fantastic. These people came literally from the Stone Age into what we call the twentieth century. Note how he has two hats on his head—that's his whole wealth. We learned later that a carload of food, sent by compassionate Texans, was refused and turned back by Mexican customs officials. No starvation existed in Mexico, said the Mexicans.

Confessional, Mexico 1933-35 :: Etching :: $7\frac{5}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$

Now this is a story. I hope I don't offend the Catholics—my wife was born a Catholic. I was in the Cathedral of Mexico City. This priest was taking confession from the ladies, you see, and picking his nose the while. I was sitting in a pew sketching him. He looked up and saw me. When he finished his confession, he came out after me. At that period the Mexican government was very hostile to the Church. The Church was inviolate within the Church, but outside they had no jurisdiction—and he went after me in earnest. I don't think he was more than one step behind me when I escaped from the

church. If he'd grabbed me, God knows what would've happened to me! In an effort to placate my wife and her sister, you'll notice that I changed his cross to a swastika.

Parral, Chihuahua Watercolor :: $15\frac{3}{16} \times 22\frac{1}{4}$

This is where my brother was president of a mine that was started by Robert Towne in 1890 or thereabout. Then Diaz was the dictator and welcomed American capital. Towne was a genius: he started with nothing, and he staked twelve mines which became so valuable that, by the time the war broke in 1914, he was worth over a \$100 million. That's the town of Parral.

The Lucky Play 1933-35 :: Soft ground etching :: $5\frac{5}{16} \times 8\frac{7}{8}$

Every night there was a game going on in every village—very picturesque. During one of these trips I was arrested. It was in the town of Mantes which gave a famous president to Mexico, Calles. His son was mayor of the town. There was a little provincial circus carrying on this night, and I was busy sketching it. Suddenly I felt guns pressed against my side; I thought, what the hell is this? Two policemen had me surrounded, and they said in Spanish, "What are you doing here? You doing espionage?" I said, "You must be crazy, you must be stupid." "Oh, we stupid, huh?" So they arrested me and they took me to jail.

There was an American fruit buyer staying at the hotel where we were, and he went along with us. He said, "Don't worry; Calles's son is a friend of mine and is the mayor and the judge here and runs the whole business." But Calles's son was out on a hunting trip. A real fat Mexican peasant dressed with a collar button in his shirt—he had no collar, but he had a collar button—said to this Texan who was telling me what not to say, "Now keep your mouth shut, don't make any remarks. I'll take care of it." "This man has insulted us," the Mexican said. The Texan disagreed, "No, he hasn't; he didn't mean to; he's an artist." "Oh," he said, "tell him to come tomorrow morning; I'll put him in your custody for tonight. He can go back to his hotel."

I went back the next morning to be sentenced, and the judge was a little warmer. And the American said, "Now is the time to suggest that you'd like to do a portrait drawing of him." And my friend advised me *in sotto voce*, "For crissakes, make him look handsome." I got out of that one by making this moron very handsome. Pleased, the judge said, "Thank you very much.

Don't ever do this again without our permission. Any time you want to draw here, come to us and we will give you permission."

I learned that at that time the Mexican artist Siqueiros was arrested in Los Angeles for leading a Communist procession. This apparently was Mexico's answer to America.

Watercolor Portrait – Mexico Watercolor :: 17 x 15

This girl was a waitress at the American mine at Parral. My brother was president at the time. She was a very charming youngster. This is very much like her.

Portrait of a Young Man Watercolor :: 20⁷/₁₆ x 14³/₄

Mexican Indian peasant.

Sketchbook from Artist's 1935 Trip to Mexico

PUERTO RICO AND PUERTO RICANS

El Jibaro – Puerto Rico 1940 :: Etching :: 11⁷/₈ x 9¹⁵/₁₆

Jibaro is the Puerto Rican name for peasant. Most of their crop was either tobacco or sugar cane. This one worked a sugar cane field.

Cane Workers in Puerto Rico 1936 :: Oil on canvas :: 30 x 24

That's in Puerto Rico—sugar cane farmers again. This little child brought lunch to her grandfather, and I caught her just at that point. Very typical of the cane farmer . . . for now everything is mechanized, you know.

Young Plowman Watercolor :: 21¹³/₁₆ x 14³/₁₆

This is a Puerto Rican. These people are hospitable and warm . . .



Lace Makers

Puerto Rican Farmhand 1935 :: Watercolor :: $15\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{3}{4}$

This is the head of "The Young Plowman." There was a certain nobility about him.

Puerto Rican Wash Day 1937 :: Watercolor :: $22\frac{1}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$

Portrait of a Young Woman Watercolor :: $21\frac{7}{16} \times 14\frac{9}{16}$

This is a Puerto Rican girl, a rather nice portrait of her. I have forgotten where I did this. She looks like she's wearing her Sunday best. Yes, she was a very nice child.



Pastoral – Puerto Rico

Lace Makers 1944 :: Etching :: $9\frac{11}{14} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$:: (illus.)

This was done in a convent where girls from the outside were taught lace making by the nuns. Every one is a portrait. The contrast between the types, black and white, was quite engaging. They were all very expert.

Puerto Rican Boy Watercolor :: $21\frac{5}{8} \times 15$

The Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico are suffering from all kinds of illnesses—malaria and God knows what else. This boy was typical, a kind of pathetic forerunner. And I think I caught him, too. In those days I had no compunctions in getting someone to pose, saying “*Reste y no se meuva. . .*” They’d look at me, you know, in astonishment; they had a certain awe of Americans, you see. And then I would paint them before they came to.



Puerto Rican Folk Song

Pastoral – Puerto Rico 1939 :: Etching :: $9 \times 11\frac{7}{8}$:: (illus.)

This is one of the nice ones I think I did. You know, the Volga porters have this chant, and not the one you hear in the “Volga Boatman,” but a chant where they lift up these enormous weights to their backs—and struggle bowlegged to carry the load. In Puerto Rico they have a chant in which the leader and the men behind him move along to the chant as they hoe the tobacco. And they go right through the field; you could hear them chanting and moving, chanting and moving.

Puerto Rican Folk Song 1940 :: Etching :: $10\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$:: (illus.)

An entomologist and I were staying at a school in San Herman in Puerto Rico, conducted by American missionaries. Each night he would drive his

car to a swamp and capture the insects that were attracted by the car lamps. The natives knew him and were friendly, and on the night I accompanied him they threw us a party which started at midnight. All night long the music went on with the audience changing all during the night. Some returned with children, husbands, and dogs. It was for me an extraordinary experience with folk music of the people that had never been recorded or put down on paper. The etching is the result.

VERMONT AND VERMONTERS

I lived in Cavendish, a backward part of Vermont where my brother Arnold and I built a home and a studio. And Solzhenitsyn now lives in our house having bought our place from Arnold's widow. Many of the Vermont landscapes are the views familiar to Solzhenitsyn. And you know who lived here in Cavendish, Teddy Roosevelt's daughter, Mrs. Derby whose husband Dr. Derby was Roosevelt's doctor. A wonderful woman. I was at Solzhenitsyn's house last summer. This time he refused to come out to greet me so I didn't see him. His wife said he's so busy writing. He has written nine novels in the years he's been there. He works day and night hoping that this'll be his legacy to posterity, for he is still bitter after his Harvard speech last year that his message is not better received here. Other views show other villages and towns of Vermont. There's Perkinsville and Chelsea where ex-Governor Keyser of Vermont lived. I painted his portrait which now hangs in the State House at Montpelier.

Landscape, Vermont Watercolor :: 15 x 22 :: Harvard

I painted watercolors extensively in those early days and consequently became quite familiar with the countryside. Some were good and some not so good, but I enjoyed doing them.

Vermont Landscape Watercolor :: 15^{3/8} x 22^{5/8}



James D. Hoffman

Autumn in Vermont

Vermont Landscape Watercolor :: $1\frac{5}{16} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$

Countryside, Vermont Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$:: Harvard

Vermont Sunset Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$

You know how Vermont is in the fall. That's rather nice—pinks, purples, sort of exploding.

Vermont Sky Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$:: Harvard

Vermont Mountains and Countryside Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$:: Harvard

House and Mountain Landscape Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$:: Harvard

Autumn in Vermont Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{16} \times 2\frac{5}{8}$:: (illus.)

See, the more successful watercolors are done rapidly, I think. A watercolor should be a statement of the moment. Anything more is redundant.

Vermont, Autumnal Landscape Watercolor :: $1\frac{5}{16} \times 2\frac{7}{16}$

A very hilly area.

Vermont Landscape with Barn in the Distance Watercolor :: $1\frac{15}{16} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$

Barn and Sky, Vermont Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$:: Harvard

Barn and Landscape, Vermont Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$:: Harvard

Farmhouse Landscape Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$:: Harvard

Hillside, Vermont Watercolor :: $1\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$:: Harvard

Tree Landscape, Vermont Watercolor :: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$:: Harvard

Old Tree in Vermont Watercolor :: $15\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{5}{8}$

There are plenty of old trees in Vermont! That was in Cavendish; most of the watercolors I did were around Cavendish.

Tree Study Pencil drawing :: $13\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$:: Unsigned

Old Farm, Vermont Watercolor :: 15×22 :: Harvard

Farmhouse, Vermont Watercolor :: $14\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{1}{2}$:: Harvard

Haying in Vermont Watercolor :: $15\frac{3}{16} \times 22\frac{9}{16}$

I did this from the house we sold to Solzhenitsyn. That's the view he now enjoys. Looks just about like this this fall weekend. Maybe a little bit brighter.

Vermont Landscape with Old Barn Watercolor and pastel :: $15\frac{7}{16} \times 22\frac{1}{2}$

Above our place in Cavendish. I did many of these old places.

The Cultivators 1945 :: Drypoint :: $8\frac{5}{8} \times 11\frac{7}{8}$:: (illus.)

Mr. Talcky Howard cultivating corn with his son. Howard came from Plymouth Kingdom as did Calvin Coolidge.

Vermont Farmer in Horse Barn Watercolor :: $15 \times 21\frac{1}{2}$

My friend Clyde Barber of Cavendish. He supplied us with venison from the deer he claimed attacked him during the summer. A typical Vermonter.

Horsecart and Workers Watercolor :: $15\frac{1}{4} \times 22\frac{3}{4}$:: Harvard

Study of Horses Pencil drawing :: $10\frac{11}{16} \times 12\frac{3}{8}$:: Unsigned

Scene with Work Horses, Vermont Watercolor :: $13\frac{3}{16} \times 22\frac{9}{16}$

Study of a Plowhorse Ink and charcoal surrounded by pencil sketches, mounted on cardboard

Eddie La Croix of Woodstock 1963 :: Oil on canvas :: 30×24 :: Artist's Collection

He claimed he had an ancestor who was a marshal in Napoleon's army. He is



The Cultivators

a carpenter, did work on my old house. Very typical of the people in our neighborhood . . . simple, direct. And one of the most knowledgeable people around about bears. He is the official bear hunter for the state of New Hampshire. Goes out and tags bears.

“Rocking Benny” of Proctorsville 1950 :: Oil on canvas :: 30 x 24 :: Artist’s Collection

Here’s a man in Cavendish who used to visit with the children. He was arthritic and could hardly move. The kids would just flock to him. He would always have candy to give to them . . . a sincere and genial person, you can see. You can tell how arthritic he was by his hands. Rocking Benny was very popular. Everybody loved him, as I did.

Hollis Quinn of Cavendish 1954 :: Oil on canvas :: 34 x 24 :: Artist's collection (illus.)

A neighbor in Cavendish. He lives right next door to Solzhenitsyn. A silent man of few words, he would manage to say four or five words a week.

"Pinky" of Cavendish late 1940's :: Oil on canvas :: 32 x 22 :: Artist's collection

This is Pinky, the hired man. In his early thirties he was living with a young lady of seventy-four. Actually! And her children refused to let him marry her, you know it was a little too bizarre. I said, "Pinky, how do you like married life?" He said, "Like it very much; but we're not going to have children now; we're having fun first!"

Vermont Farmer (Talcky . . .) 1945 :: Watercolor :: 19⁷/₁₆ x 13¹/₈

Here is the Vermont farmer who went to school with Calvin Coolidge. His name was Howard. We called him "Talcky" because he believed that talc could cure anything. It could grow anything and cure any disease. He actually would buy a carload of talc, which he advertised and sold through farm journals. He handled his business from Cavendish. When his wife died, they found a cupboard with bundles of talc. When she cried for help—she had a dozen different complications—he'd put another bag of talc on her practically smothering her to death. Once I said to him, "Mr. Howard, how come you went to school with Calvin Coolidge, but how come he became President and you're still a farmer?" He says, "Damned if I could figure it out!"

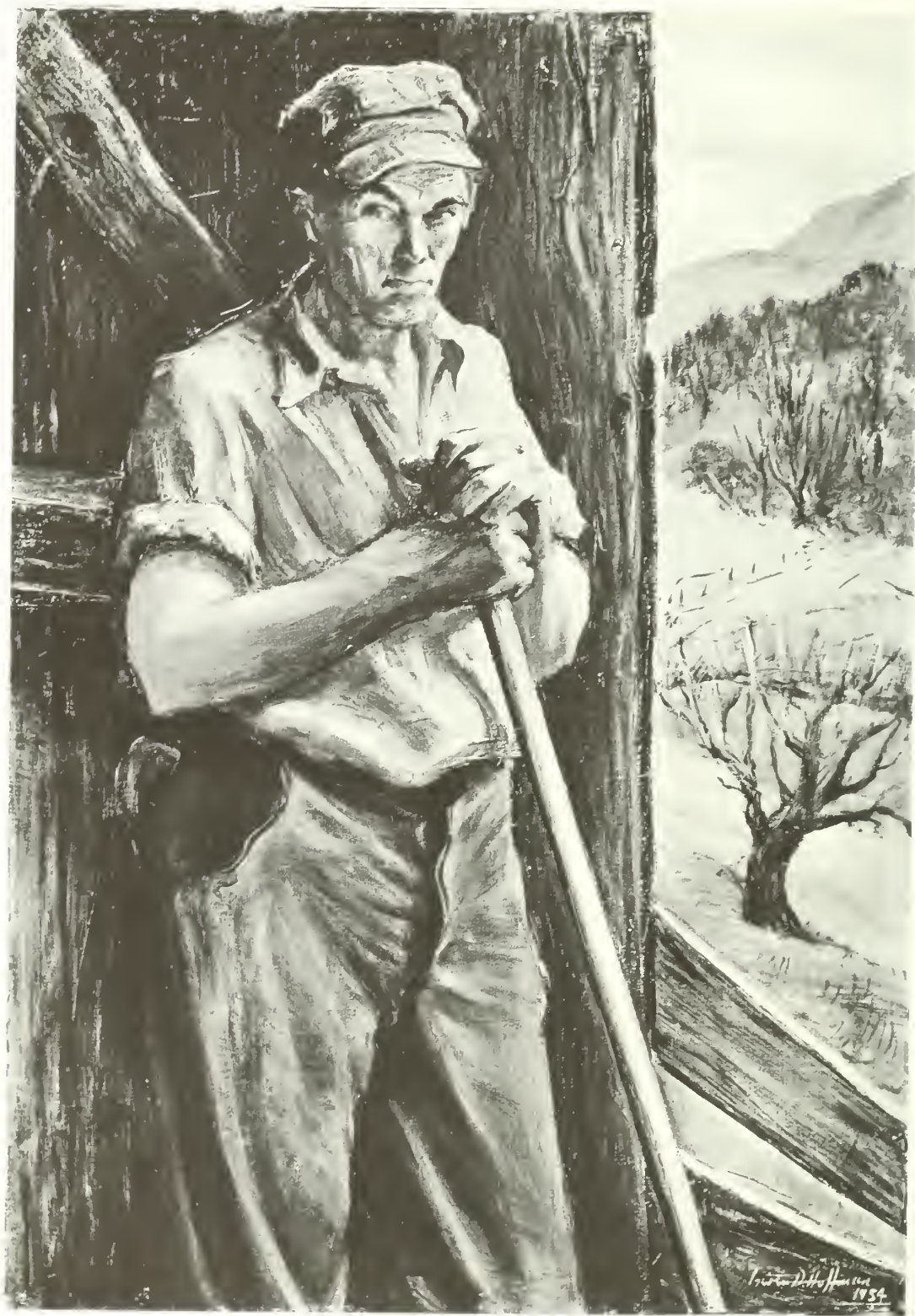
Farmer Watercolor :: 22 x 14¹/₂ :: Harvard

Here again is Talcky . . . this time cultivating tobacco with his son.

Talcky Howard, Cavendish, Vt Neighbor Watercolor :: 20 x 13¹/₂

Vermont Farmer Sharpening a Saw Watercolor :: 22³/₈ x 15³/₁₆

This is Will Atkinson in Cavendish. At the time I painted this I was a member of a farmer's group—all the farmers belonged to it. At the farmers' meetings my brother Arnold would play the piano, and I would play the violin. We played classical music and they loved it. They were very polite.



Hollis Quinn of Cavendish

Little Girl with Blue Eyes Watercolor :: 22⁹/₁₆ x 8³/₁₆

She's one of the Johnson children, a Cavendish family. There were ten children; the father just couldn't make a living. My brother and I would hire Mrs. Johnson to help and do odd jobs to bring food into the house. This is one of the children. And you know, I got a letter the other day from one of the Johnson girls living in Kittery, Maine, wondering if I had any pictures left that I did of the children—and I painted all of them. Adorable kids, you can see. And all prospered.

PORTRAITS

Portrait of Artist's Mother, Minna Aronson Hoffman 1954 :: Oil on canvas
:: 24 x 20 :: Artist's collection (illus. p. 20)

That's Mama, that's my little mother. This was done in '54; she died in '79. She was ninety-five; born in 1874. That is my favorite.

Jacob Hillel Hoffman 1870–1927 :: portrait bust :: late 1960's :: Bronze :: Harvard
(illus. p. 31)

My father was a tailor, and how he ever sent three boys to Harvard—and me to art school—I will never know. He was one of the most extraordinary men, I think, in my life. Being Jewish and coming from Russia, he despised the Russians, as anyone did who went through that whole experience. And most of the Jews in this country that escaped Russia were pro-German in the First World War, did you know that? Even Jacob Schiff refused to join the New York bankers, headed by J. P. Morgan, in a loan to the Allies. And he refused to do it if Russia would be one of the recipients. He was castigated by Morgan who labeled him a traitor to the Allied cause.

Ensign David Hoffman, USNR Oil on canvas :: 60 x 42 :: U.S. Coast Guard Academy
(illus. p. 28)

David A. Hoffman 1950 :: Oil on composition board :: 18 x 14 :: Artist's collection

My brother David, Harvard, Class of '17. It was a war class, comparable to the Class of 1861 at Harvard. Nearly everybody went, but in this case it was quite different. Well, my brother exemplified the tragic break between generations. Not only that, but he was a first-generation American and completely and wholly American. All his feelings were based on his own experience and his own life here—not on my parents' experiences. And they would have bitter arguments—David and my father. I remember when he'd come home from Harvard on weekends; and how they argued—David despising the Germans for their barbaric devastation of Belgium, and my father despising the Russians and unable to embrace them in this war. I dreaded those weekends because my father was afraid that David would get caught in this thing. Well, he did. He volunteered two weeks before war was declared. He organized a group—that's how strongly he felt—he organized a group of students that were trained at Boston Harbor and then at Marblehead.

One of the tragedies of this whole thing happened next. The Navy was nothing in those days—an ignorant Warrant Officer was put in charge of training volunteers. These are the real tragedies of war. They turned a Chief Warrant Officer into a commissioned officer, and he was in charge. On the day of my brother's commencement at Harvard, he wouldn't allow David off the ship. My parents went to Harvard's commencement, and their eldest son was not there. It was tragic. That guy was a lowbrow—but how about the Navy that refused to raise David's rank from Ensign after his death. This was a usual thing, but in David's case it did not apply.

Well, of course, my brother never came back. When the war broke, the convoy system hadn't been inaugurated. In Herbert Hoover's memoirs he tells that Admiral Sims, before we entered the War, told Hoover, who came back to this country from Europe to take charge of the food business, to give Wilson two messages, one that the English were falsifying the tonnage being lost en route to Europe. They were giving lower figures because at that rate they were losing the war. Sims warned that if we expected to get an army to Europe, we had to have convoys. That was the second message, and Wilson had to fight like hell for this, you know that?

And that's when my brother, who was on the battleship *North Dakota* at the time, volunteered for overseas service and was assigned to the *Tampa*, which was torpedoed just at the end of the War. But he wrote a letter in August 1918 that almost duplicated one by General Pershing, that if we don't beat the Germans on the field, he said, it will happen again in another generation.

His ship was torpedoed on September the 26th when the war was practically ended. I say that this wasn't an act of war, it was a typical act of German *schrecklichkeit*. The *U.S.S. Tampa* was less than one mile from its base at Bristol, England, when this verminous German Commander Rose used his last fish on his way back to base, and blew up the *Tampa* with the loss of all hands.

Arnold Hoffman 1963 :: Oil on canvas :: 40 x 30 :: Harvard (illus. p. 27)

My brother Arnold was Harvard Class of '25. He and Robert together prospected and promoted mines in Canada. His book *Free Gold* which I illustrated has become a classic history of Canadian mining. He later became President of Mesabi Iron Co.

Michael A. Hoffman Oil on composition board :: 11³/₄ x 9 :: Artist's collection

This is my brother Arnold's son, Michael Arnold Hoffman.

Robert D. Hoffman 1953 :: Oil on canvas :: 34 x 26 :: Harvard (illus. p. 22)

Robert D. Hoffman as Prospector Oil on canvas :: 34¹/₂ x 22¹/₂ :: Harvard (illus. p. 30)

My brother Robert was the first Harvard graduate of the Mining Engineering School. He later staked the Arrowhead Mine in Northern Quebec, and the largest iron deposit in North America, Quebec Cobalt. He funded the building of the Geological Sciences at Harvard University, named after David and Arnold. He was one of the great prospectors of his time. He and Arnold traveled the length and breadth of Canada.

Self-Portrait 1930 :: Charcoal :: 15¹/₄ x 10³/₄

I sure took myself seriously then, didn't I? But you know it was very typical, not only of me but of a period in my life. I lived in New York after my travels in Europe in '27. We all moved to New York in 1928 after my father's death in 1927.

Self-Portrait 1935 :: Oil on composition board :: 10 x 14¹/₂ :: Artist's collection

That is how an artist looks to himself, you see. Ah, you should have known me . . . fifty years ago.

Self-Portrait (triple portrait) :: 1961 :: Oil on canvas :: 24 x 36 :: Harvard (illus. p. 21)

Those are the different sides of Irwin Hoffman. This one on the right is looking at the other two. Very typical, or quizzical.

Self-Portrait 1971 :: Bronze :: Harvard

My years of study under the great Charles Grafly came into good stead when I did bronzes of my family.

Self-Portrait 1974 :: Oil on composition board :: 16 x 12 :: Artist's collection

That's the old so-and-so, our favorite self-portrait. I was older then than I am now, I think.

Budapest String Quartet 1949 :: Etching :: 11 x 13³/₄ :: (illus.)

I am re-doing that now, doing another one of the quartet. But, you know, they were the greatest quartet, I think, in history—no question. And it always amused me when they played the Beethoven late quartets. No one played them as well as those four Jews!



Budapest String Quartet

Portrait of a Young Lady 1953 :: Oil on canvas :: 34 x 26 :: Artist's collection

Her name was Muffie Vaughn and I would like to find her sister, whose husband is a professor at Harvard. She was a cellist and played in an orchestra where I used to play. A very lovely girl—and probably this canvas is the most perfect example of the Maroger medium which was developed by Jacques Maroger. He was the head conservator at the Louvre, and he worked out what he believed was the medium that was used by the Dutch. With all the logic that one could bring to it, the Dutch, of course, developed “Dutch white.” They developed linen for painting on linen, and they also developed a linseed oil for painting. The Van Eycks were the first in Europe to use linseed oil. I planned this canvas very carefully—and if I had had any brains, I would have continued that way. Everything is done according to a prepared plan in the use of the technique. This painting hasn’t changed one bit since I painted it!

Now, Muffie’s sister is married to some Harvard professor whose name I’ve forgotten. They came down to New York to see me. Muffie married an Egyptian and died in Egypt. If I could find her sister now, I’d like her to have the portrait.

Pierre Monteux 1959 :: Oil on canvas :: 34¹/₄ x 26¹/₄ :: Gift of Walter and Wendy McQuillan (illus.)

I was commissioned to paint Pierre Monteux by his family. After I sketched him conducting the New York Philharmonic and completed the portrait, his family showed no interest in seeing it, let alone acquiring it.

Musical Figures (Artist’s Sketchbook)

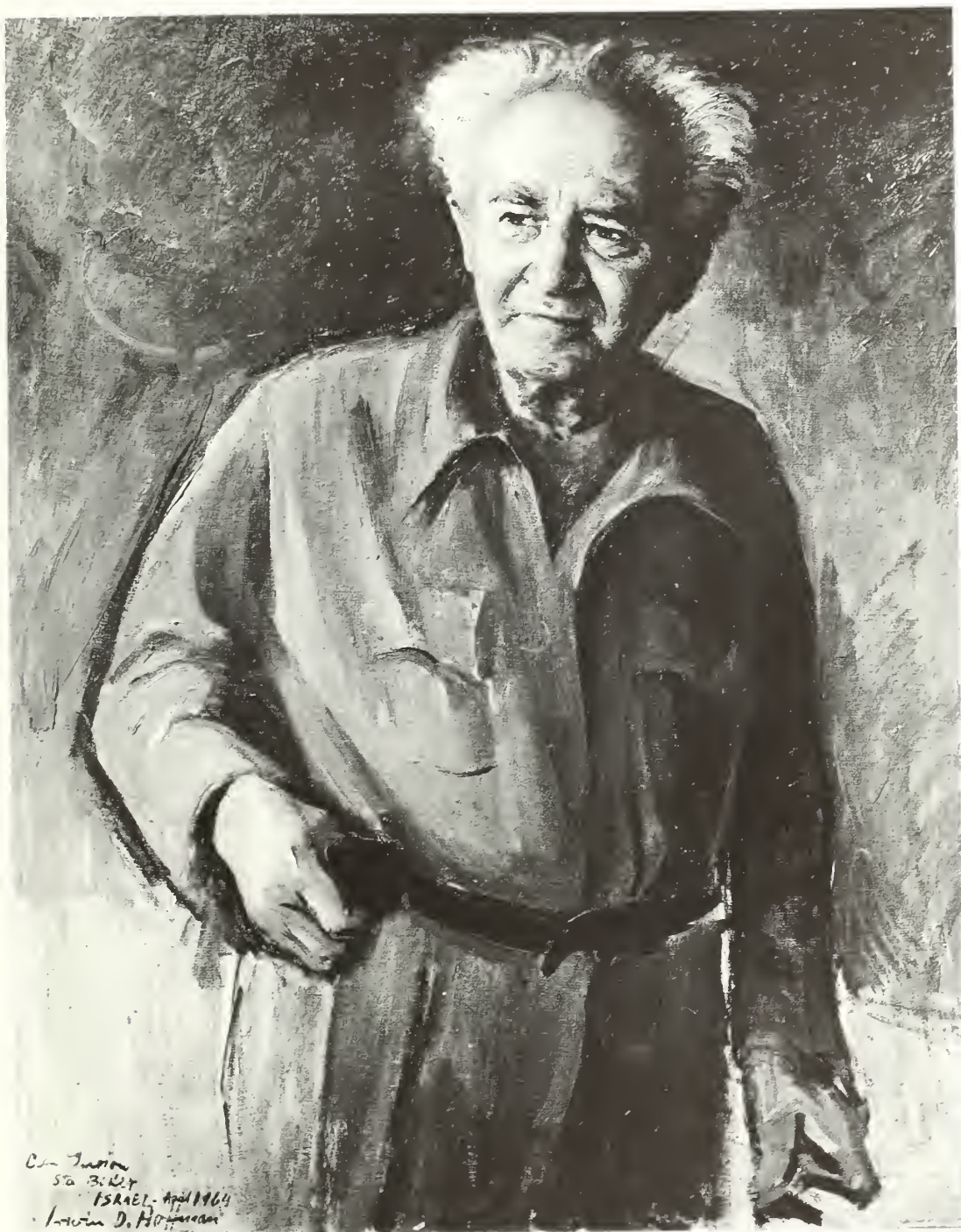
Individual members of Budapest String Quartet and Arthur Rubinstein.

David Green Ben-Gurion 1886–1973 :: Oil on canvas :: 36 x 30 :: Artist’s collection (illus.)

That’s my friend Ben-Gurion. It was painted from life down in the Ste Boker in the Negev Desert. My biggest mistake was not having a tape recorder because my mother was there with me at the time at Ste Boker. I must tell you about my mother! She could speak Yiddish, but in Israel she refused to speak it. She was American; that was it. When we got down to Ben-Gurion’s place and Ben-Gurion started speaking Yiddish—and of course my mother an-



Pierre Monteux



David Green Ben-Gurion

swered him in Yiddish. And the two of them hit it off speaking only Yiddish. That's the only time in Israel that she used Yiddish.

My mother got into an argument with his wife, Paula, who was famous for her undiplomatic conduct. It went like this: "Well, the Russians are starving to death," says my mother. And Mrs. Ben-Gurion said, "What do you mean? I don't think so." And my mother: "Of course they are." "How do you know," challenged Mrs. Ben-Gurion. And my mother, "Because I was born there; I should know." Then Mrs. Ben-Gurion turned to me, "Mr. Hoffman, I can see that you're a henpecked son." And the exchanges went on and on.

I remember one occasion. I was painting on the porch of Ben-Gurion's bungalow while the writer, Robert St. John (biographer of Nehru and Nasser) was inside with Ben-Gurion working on his memoirs. Mrs. Ben-Gurion, who was a real character, said to me, "Hoffman, what do you think of this St. John?" "He's a bright man," I said. "Well," she said, "you know, I don't trust him. What did he say about Ben-Gurion when he was with Nasser? I'd like to find out." Just then out came St. John. "Come over here St. John," she said, "what did you say about Ben-Gurion when you were with Nasser?" He reeled; he couldn't answer that. "And," she continued, "what are you saying about Nasser to Ben-Gurion?"

She complained to my wife Dorothy that she had great difficulty in keeping her husband well, watching him, and caring for him. And Dorothy said, "Well, I have the same responsibility with my husband." And she said, "How can you compare your husband to mine!"

Dr. Béla Schick 1877–1967 :: 1957 :: Oil on canvas :: Artist's collection

That's Béla Schick, pushing eighty. He was the originator of the Schick Test. That's a very good portrait of him. Really a wonderful portrait of him. He was a great benefactor to the children of the world. His classic remark to me was, "Mr. Hoffman, you know what the trouble is today?" I said, "What?" He said, "There are too many peasants."

He never would take a bus. He lived on the other side of town where his wife owned an apartment on 86th Street and Park Avenue. She wouldn't let him take a cab. She insisted that he take a bus. He would come in the worst weather by bus and walk a block, even when it was storming. He was a character, but a very sweet and genial old man. You can see it, can't you?

Cardinal Joseph Francis Spellman 1889–1967 :: 1961 :: Oil on canvas :: 36 x 30 :: Artist's collection (illus.)

Cardinal Spellman—whose father worked in a shoe factory in Brockton, Massachusetts. I'll tell you an amusing story about him. When I first met him and I started to paint him, he was a very affable, sweet gentleman; but he kept his distance. In talking to him and trying to keep him interested, I asked if he knew a Father O'Neil. "Father O'Neil in East Boston?" I said "Yes. He was a great friend of my parents. He was the priest of the Sacred Heart Church there." He said, "Father O'Neil was my mentor! He was my whole life in the Church." And so after this the Cardinal and I became very good friends, and he became very cordial and warm.

When he'd start to pose, he'd say, "I had a very hard day yesterday. Will you excuse me if I close my eyes for a minute?" And in ten seconds he was snoring. I was so frustrated I had no idea what I should do. He could snore for two hours right through, without stopping. I would hem and I would haw. I couldn't wake him up—because, after all, he was a cardinal. Finally I asked one of the Monsignors—they're the only ones allowed to dress a cardinal, did you know that? I said, "Can't you get someone to sit in for him? I have to do all this lacework, you know." The Monsignor said, "Sure, we'll get O'Grady." O'Grady was a janitor, a real Gothic type. He came in dressed as the cardinal—and what a cardinal he made! He was perfect, and the Monsignor said, "Who says that clothes don't make the man!"

Doriot Anthony Dwyer Oil on canvas :: 26 x 34 :: Anthony collection (illus.)

Her mother played the flute—I used to play chamber music with her. Daughter Doriot just would not pose for me unless she could continue her practicing—and all she would practice were scales! She was the most modest and self-critical musician I ever met.

Oriental 1948 :: Oil on canvas :: 36 x 24 :: Artist's collection

She looks like an Oriental, but actually she came from Haiti where her uncle was opposition candidate to Papa Doc. Of course, he lost the election, and he lost his life and his family. His family disappeared. She managed to get out of Haiti by marrying an American psychiatrist who came to a nightclub where she was singing. He married her and took her to New York where I painted her.



Cardinal Francis Joseph Spellman



Doriot Anthony Dwyer

Study of a Woman Pencil drawing :: $13\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$

Rear Admiral Frank Leamy Oil on canvas :: 60×42 :: U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Rear Admiral Stephen H. Evans Oil on canvas :: 60×42 :: U.S. Coast Guard Academy

In keeping with my family's longstanding ties to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, I painted the portraits of a great many contemporary and historical figures in the service including all of the Superintendents of the Academy since 1950. The portraits are all at the Academy. Admiral Leamy succeeded in modernizing the Coast Guard Academy—despite strong opposition from the Commandant at that time. Admiral Evans was a most charming and interesting military man. His ambition was to uncover the mystery and secrets of the Etruscans.

FACES OF SUFFERING

Volga Peasants 1930 :: Etching :: $6\frac{5}{16} \times 7\frac{15}{16}$

I was there in 1929. Russia was the biggest fraud and lie in history—I think, in all civilization. All people were beaten down and miserable. You couldn't sketch anybody; it was forbidden. But on the Volga boat, going down the Volga—we went down from Nizhni Novgorod to Vladiva Kafkhaz—I saw the real results of Communism. Peasants would come aboard at each village, you know, and try the next town. They would huddle with their few belongings . . . it was so pathetic. Their conditions were so terrible, beyond belief. At night while they slept I sketched them in their misery. When the sketches were published in the *New York Evening Post*, in 1930, they revealed for the first time the true conditions of the peasants. As a result, I was attacked by the *Daily Worker* and was accused of being an enemy of the people. Many painters in New York were enthusiastic Communists—and there were very many in those days who became my sworn enemies.

There was one incident involving this mother with three children who was



Peasants Sleeping on Deck of Volga River Boat

going to the next village . . . and she had a little package which contained flour. It was the only food they had. And this vicious, ignorant typical bureaucrat took that flour and said, "You've no right to take food out of this village!" and threw it in the water! These sketches show the miserable conditions aboard those river boats. All peasants went steerage. The declassification of the Russian people was a great fraud.

Peasants Sleeping on Deck of Volga River Boat Watercolor :: 22½ x 15¼
:: (illus.)

Russia – 1930 – Third Class 1930 :: Etching :: 7¹⁵/₁₆ x 5¹⁵/₁₆ :: (illus.)

Third class: they're not supposed to have classes there! But it made a beautiful composition; it certainly gave us a picture of the terrible poverty. Pathetic, isn't it?

Mother & Child – Russian 1930 :: Etching :: 4 x 6⁵/₁₆

That's the first etching I ever made. I was deeply touched by their situation. It haunted me. Those poor people. You know, as Kerensky (whom I heard at the Harvard Club several times where he delivered lectures on Russia and what happened—he took over after the Tsar was deposed) said, "The first victims of Communism were the Russian people." They did things to those people that are just incredible, and they're still doing them. Stalin probably murdered more Russians than did the Germans in World War II.

Gethsemane of the Russian Peasant 1930 :: Etching :: 7¹⁵/₁₆ x 6⁵/₁₆

I think I captured something here—the symbol of what really happened in Russia. Solzhenitsyn has one of these prints, and he was quite taken with this etching. I'm reminded of a story. You know, I've got one foot in the mining business; I had to take over mining interests in Canada that my brothers left. And one of my connections was the Newmont Mining Company. The vice president is an old friend of mine. I gave him some mining prints, and he wanted me to meet Plato Malazenov, a Russian of the old Russia, who is Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer; and he arranged a luncheon so that I could meet him. So I matted a few of these Russian prints and brought them along to the luncheon. Well, Plato was so taken with these things; it brought back all those memories. As a youngster he and his family



Russia - 1930 - Third Class



Depression — 1931

escaped to Europe to save their lives. They finally came to the United States —after they went to Europe, to Paris, where he studied the violin for a year. He's a chamber music player—and a famous mining executive.

Depression 1931 :: Etching :: $3\frac{7}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{8}$:: (illus.)

It was hopeless, the Depression, actually hopeless. One had to live through it to realize the human misery and tragedy.

Bread Line — New York 1934 :: Lithograph :: $8\frac{15}{16} \times 12$:: (illus.)

That was during the Depression . . . a terrible period. I did this from a sketch that I had done in the early Thirties. The soup kitchens were all downtown, down in New York, and they were all competing with one another for the souls—to convert them to religion. They were in competition with each other. And they served very good lunches. The soup was excellent, and I would go and have a cup of soup. After I had my lunch I would sketch them. I never converted.

New York 1931 :: Etching :: $7\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$

I made many studies of the people at that time.



Bread Line – New York

You Have a Friend in Chase Manhattan 1931 :: Etching :: $3\frac{7}{8} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$

The Chase Manhattan has their slogan, of course. I thought the irony of this thing was so strong. It was terrible, the Depression; it was something not to be endured again.

Soup Kitchen 1934 :: Lithograph :: $16 \times 11\frac{3}{4}$

Sketched in 1930.

Job 16:18 1940 :: "O earth cover thou not my blood nor let my cry have resting place" :: Etching :: $11\frac{7}{8} \times 8\frac{7}{8}$:: (illus.)

That, I think, tells the whole story of the Holocaust. An elderly man, hopeless, the mother, the innocent child, the poor old lady with a resigned expression . . . the baby. I have never sold a print of this subject; no one would go near it. Maybe it's too much for people to take. The indifference of people in



Job 16:18 "O earth cover not my blood
Nor let my cry have resting place"

the West was prophetic, including Jews whom I could never interest in this print. It says something about the indifference and fear of people. Witness Poland, Israel, Iran, and the attitudes of Europeans about Russia.

Crucifixion 1932 :: Lithograph :: $9\frac{1}{8} \times 13\frac{1}{8}$

The rise of Hitler.

War 1939 :: Lithograph :: $9\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{15}{16}$

Remember the impact of the Nazi attack on Poland? I'm afraid war is endemic to the human animal. We still have one foot in the cave. The Russians have taken up where the Germans left off.

OTHER FACES, OTHER SCENES

Portrait in Watercolor, Mykonos 1964 :: Watercolor :: $15\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{16}$

Mykonos – Portrait in Watercolor 1964 :: Watercolor :: $13\frac{5}{16} \times 11\frac{7}{16}$

I was sketching at a certain spot in Mykonos and this girl came up to watch me. She was a German girl. Of course, I had never had much use for the Germans, especially after the First World War, you know. This girl was full of guilt about the Nazis. She wanted so much to be friendly, and I made no bones about it, you know. She was a rather attractive German youngster. Maybe you can see some of that in her posture, kind of an attempt to transcend the things that had happened in her country.

Mykonos 1964 :: Watercolor :: $15\frac{3}{16} \times 22\frac{1}{8}$

This is Mykonos, one of those Greek islands. The windmill must have come from Mykonos. The Dutch windmill must have come from there because this place was just covered with windmills. And when I was working on it, a priest came along, very fortunately, and I stuck him in there to give it a sense of location.



Sky & Water: Nantucket

Sky & Water: Nantucket Watercolor :: $14\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{7}{16}$:: (illus.)

That was at Nantucket . . . must go back to the early Twenties. My brother Robert had a house there where I visited.

Sea of Galilee 1964 :: Watercolor :: $15\frac{1}{8} \times 22\frac{3}{8}$

That's the view from the hotel room. Now, this is interesting. The Sea of Galilee is 500 feet below sea level, did you know that? And up here, see, are the Golan Heights where the Syrians were bombarding the Israeli kibbutzim every night, where children had never slept above ground in their lives. They slept in dugouts, and they were being shelled mightily with American artillery; this was the thing that burnt me up. We gave these monsters the wherewithal to do it. Today Prime Minister Begin has annexed the Golan Heights officially and our State Department weeps for poor Syria. It was handed to Syria by the English and French who had the mandates of Palestine and Syria. Under the Turks it was part of Palestine.

The Patriarch 1936 :: Etching :: $6\frac{7}{8} \times 5$

A Talmudic scholar.

Appalachian Sharecroppers late 1930's :: Oil on canvas :: 24×35 :: (illus.)

Here we see three sharecroppers in North Carolina. I joined my brothers and several Harvard professors of geology to visit a kyanite mine in North Carolina in the Smoky Mountains. When they went into the mine, I went down to see what I could sketch. I found this mother and two kids working three rows. They had done the whole field. But this is what they got for it: the three rows for themselves. Very simple people . . . and terribly exploited. [Among the memorabilia in the exhibition was a photograph of the artist sketching the same people.]

Appalachian Mountain Children late 1930's :: Oil on canvas :: 28×22 :: (illus.)

This is a story. When the Harvard professor and my brothers went underground, I wanted to do some sketching. So they told me to be careful; if you look in the wrong direction, I was told, you're apt to get a bullet through you. You see, moonshiners were at work there. So one of the miners came out of the mine to tell me where I could paint. He said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "Well, I saw a log cabin down the road I'd like to paint." He said,

"Well, I'll arrange it." So I went down to the cabin, and there was his wife and these kids. It was very primitive. His wife said, "Mister, I don't know why you wanna paint our house, but if my husband says it's all right, then go ahead and paint it!" And these children were her children; see the little girl and the boy?

Old Man of North Carolina Watercolor :: 22³/₄ x 15¹/₂

There's another story. While we were down on this mining junket with some of the Harvard professors, my brothers and I went to a place called Burnsville in North Carolina. We heard about these people that had made chairs all by hand—they used a spindle, you know, to make the legs and so forth. We wanted to get a few of these things that are indigenous to the country. So we found a shop where a man—he must've been in his eighties—who said, "Yes, we make chairs and sell 'em, but I can't sell 'em to you; I gotta speak to my pappy." He went to the door of the cabin and he gave that wild rebel yell. And out of a big yellow house on the hill came Pappy. Pappy came stalking down the hill, and where there was a creek at least nine feet wide; there was a bridge there, but he didn't use it. He jumped over it. And he told us that when he was a boy when the Civil War broke, North Carolina was pretty well divided between loyalists to the north and these fanatics in the South. He said that people had escaped from these rebels into that big yellow house. He said he remembered when the rebels set fire to the house and all around the place. And, as the people ran out, they shot them. This was one of his vivid memories of the war. This picture is Pappy.

Indian School in Santa Fe, New Mexico 1938 :: Oil on canvas :: 25 x 30

This is an Indian school at Santa Fe. You know, there are quite a few Indian schools throughout the Southwest, and the kids come from the different tribes. But the one thing that struck me is their great talent and concentration and that they all have myopic vision. They have a difficult time. They can't go back to the tribes after they've been to school because they have to discard all the things that they've learned at the white man's school before they are allowed to go back into the tribe. They are wonderful children.

Mountain Landscape Watercolor :: 14⁹/₁₆ x 21¹⁵/₁₆

That's out in Colorado . . . a very famous watering place south of Denver, Colorado Springs.



Appalachian Sharecroppers

Winter Feeding 1939 :: Etching :: $9 \times 11\frac{3}{4}$

Sketched in Colorado on my way home from San Francisco where I put up my murals on the History of Mining for the San Francisco World's Fair.

Unsung Hero – Merchant Marine 1942 :: Drypoint :: $8\frac{7}{8} \times 6$

When I did this I was a trustee of Artists for Victory. I had made a connection with Senator Wagner through my brother. Wagner's secretary Phil Levy had a son, one of those precocious kids who wanted to know how a hero could be unsung? (He had the catalogue from the A.A.A.) I had to explain that it was the Merchant Marine that supplied Europe during the war.



Appalachian Mountain Children

The Stoker 1936 :: Etching :: $8\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$:: (illus.)

He was on a cruise ship, *The Rotterdam*—I took a cruise during the Thirties. This ship was torpedoed by the Germans later, of course.

The Stokers 1936 :: Etching :: $8 \times 10\frac{7}{8}$

This was the boiler room of the *S.S. Rotterdam* that used coal to fire the boilers. She was torpedoed by the Germans in World War II.

Sailors' Mess 1936 :: Etching :: $10\frac{7}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$

Again, this was done from a sketch on the *S.S. Rotterdam*.

Nude 1935 :: Etching :: $6\frac{7}{16} \times 3\frac{7}{8}$

This is one of my first etchings. I must tell you a story about this. I made a painting of this girl, not a nude, and it was exhibited at the Milch Gallery in New York. I was about twenty-seven at the time, but I looked about twenty. I got a note from the gallery saying that there was a lady who wanted to buy that painting, would I come and meet her? So I came and she looked at me; she couldn't believe it. "Did you actually do that painting?" I said, "Yes." She just couldn't get over it. I said, "What'd you expect, me to be wearing a beard?" P.S. She never bought the painting.

Sketchbook 123 leaves :: $5\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$

One of the only remaining sketchbooks, contains nudes from European travels; and later sketches of heads of musicians, miners, and Mexicans in pencil, pen and ink, and watercolor.

Sketchbook

Drawn from war maneuvers at Camp LeJeune, done in preparation for "Naval Medicine in Pictures" for Abbott Laboratories.



The Stoker

THE ARTIST IN PROTEST

“Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me for Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven” 1947 :: Etching :: 11⁷/₈ x 8⁷/₈ :: Anonymous owner

Note the recognizable likenesses of the world leaders in foreground. When the partition of Israel was proposed in the U.N., the U.S. was against it. You can see our ambassador Austin along with Molotov and Bevin. At that time Rusk, who later became Secretary of State, was against Israel—this, right after the Holocaust.

Paradise Regained 1933 :: Etching :: 8¹⁵/₁₆ x 5⁷/₈

This is Adam and Eve . . . the German Adam and Eve. You see the Germans at the spas, you know, with their thick necks. And she—the German Eve—is suckling Cain. And the German Adam is picking skulls instead of apples; here’s the serpent, see? When Hitler had his Olympic Games in ’36, I was invited to send a painting under the auspices of the U.S. Olympic Committee with Avery Brundage running the show. I was so disgusted that I sent a letter of refusal to the Olympic Committee. And I sent a copy to *Time Magazine*. I sent them a print of this and they published it. In the German’s estimation, I became an example of the degenerate American artist at that time. The Germans held a show of degenerate American art in Berlin and this print was included. How they got it is a mystery.

MEMORABILIA

With artists, as with most individuals, life is recorded in bits and pieces of paper and picture, ephemera that bring pleasant memory or factual proof of a moment in time. But then the scraps are often destroyed. Probably the most remarkable part of the Irwin D. Hoffman Retrospective Exhibition was the assemblage of such perishable memorabilia which down the years had been saved and at last—in the exhibition—shared.

To enumerate the dramatic, often moving testaments to the energy and

individuality, social concern and charm of Hoffman which emerged in the exhibition would take too long here. Better that researchers into the life and times of Hoffman the man and Hoffman the artist discover for themselves the unique resource which—as Philip McNiff says in the Preface—makes the Boston Public Library indispensable to students and historians.

A sampling of the collection of memorabilia which Irwin Hoffman has given to the Boston Public Library includes the following:

- Photograph of Hoffman playing in a string quartet in his New York home. Hoffman has organized frequent intimate music sessions in both New York and Vermont and has thus developed a large circle of “pick-up-musician” friends.

- Certificate honoring IDH “In token of appreciation and gratitude for a significant contribution to the advancement of learning and science,” signed by Eleahu Elath, President of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

- The artist’s passport during his Paige Scholarship travels with marks from Italy, Spain, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, France, England, and The Netherlands.

- Pages from *New York Evening Post* (Saturday, March 15, 1930), “Painting the Huddled Misery of Mother Volga’s Wandering Hungry Children; Red Misery as Seen by an Artist; Moving Hordes, From Nowhere, Going Nowhere,” by Irwin Hoffman, illustrations by the author. Publication of “Impressions of Russia.”

- Eight letters from families of servicemen to Hoffman, thanking him for the portraits of their sons and praising his work. Hoffman made many portrait sketches of the war wounded at Halloran Hospital. The originals were sent to their families.

- Two pages from brother Robert’s journal describing hardships he and Irwin faced during an expedition to a remote stake.

- A photograph of IDH assessing an instrument he is in the process of making. The artist has a fully equipped workshop for making musical instruments in a converted carriage house at his Vermont home. Some of Hoffman’s instruments were included in the exhibition, among them a violin made in 1975, a copy of the Long Model of Antonio Stradivarius; and a viola made in 1978, a copy of a viola by Gasparo da Salo.

The sum total of the hundreds of photos, news clippings, sketchbooks, scrapbooks, letters, citations, and other records reveal Irwin Hoffman’s compassionate, creative adventure in living—a remarkable resource for the student and historian of art.

